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Five Letters Concerning the Inspiration Of The Holy Scriptures Translated out of French

Printed in the year 1690

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Advertisement:

BY THE TRANSLATOR, TO THE READER.

FOR the better understanding of these five Letters, it seems necessary in a few words to explain the Occasion and Subject of them. They are not, in French, one distinct Volume, as they are here made in English; but a part of two larger Volumes written in an Epistolary Form. The First entituled, (1) The Thoughts or Reflections of some Divines in *Holland*, upon Father *Simon's* Critical History of the *Old Testament*. *The Second,* (2) A Defence of

(1) *Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du vieux Testament, Composés par le* P. Richard Simon.

(2) *Defense des Sentimens, &c. contre la Reponse du Pasteur de* Bolleville.

those Thoughts, in Answer to the Prior of *Bolleville*; *who is supposed to be also the same Mr.* Simon, *disguised under a borrowed Name.*

The general Design that Mr. Simon *drives at in the Critical History of the* Old Testament, *as well as in that of the* New (*which are now both of them published in English*) *is to represent the many Difficulties that are amongst the Learned concerning the Text of the Scriptures, and thereby to infer the necessity of receiving the Roman Doctrine of* Oral Tradition.

This Design raised him many Antagonists amongst the Protestants beyond the Seas, who have opposed him in their Writings, each according to his different Genius or Principles. The Book first above mentioned was one of the earliest of that kind; and it's Anonymous Author appears second to none, either in Critical Learning, or Solid Judgment. But it is not necessary to my purpose in this place to insist upon his particular differences with Mr. Simon *in Points of Criticism. This only in general, is needful to be observed; That though on the one side he sufficiently overthrows the pretended necessity of* Oral Tradition; *and on the other side, ingenuously*

nuously acknowledges all the Difficulties that are amongst the Learned about the Text of the Scriptures; yet he does not thereupon leave the Judgment of his Reader in suspence about so weighty a matter; but propounds a middle way, which he conceives proper to settle in Mens Minds a just esteem of the Scriptures, upon a solid Foundation.

The Scheme or System of this middle way, he says, he received from his Friend Mr. N. and therefore he gives it not in his own, but in his Friend's words. It is comprized in the Eleventh and Twelfth Letters of his foresaid Book. And because That is a distinct Subject of it self, and of more consequence to the generality of Christians, than those nice Disputes of Criticism, with which he is obliged, in following Mr. Simon, to fill up the rest of that Volume, I have therefore thought fit to translate those two Letters into English. They are the two First of these Five; and are the Ground and Occasion of the rest.

The publishing of that Volume of Letters produced an Answer from Mr. Simon, or the Prior of Bolleville, as he calls himself; and further gave opportunity to the Author to learn from several hands, what-

ſoever was objected moſt materially by others againſt the fore-mentioned Scheme, which he had publiſhed in his Friend's words. This afforded him occaſion, in replying to the Prior of Bolleville, *to inſert a further explanation and defence of that Scheme, from the hand of the Author; as alſo to juſtifie himſelf for having publiſhed it; and in the laſt place to remove the great Popular Objection ariſing from a Jealouſy, leſt that Syſtem of Mr.* N's *ſhould prejudice the Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion. I ſay, it prompted him to anſwer that Objection, by giving a ſolid Demonſtration of the Truth of our Religion, without intereſſing it in this Controverſy. This is done in the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Letters of his Second Book, Entituled,* A Defence, *&c. And they are the three laſt of theſe following Five.*

I have tranſlated them all, that the Reader may at once have a full view, both of Mr. N's *Opinions concerning the Holy Scriptures, in the fore-mentioned Syſtem; of the Objections that have been made againſt it; of the Anſwers he gives to thoſe Objections; and of the Uſe that may be made of all, in ſetling the Chriſtian Religion upon a Baſis not to be ſhaken by*

by the Difficulties about the Scripture, which the Learned are forced to acknowledg to be insuperable.

This is all that I think needful to premonish the Reader upon this Subject. Only if in the perusal of the two first of these Letters, any one should be apt to condemn me for publishing things of this nice concernment in our Language, I intreat him to suspend his Censure, till he have read the rest; and as he goes along, to apply unto me the Author's Apology. Our Case is the same, and, I think, he has said all that is needful upon it. In a word, We live in an Age of so much Light, that it is not only now (as at all times) unbecoming the Dignity of such Sacred Truths, as the Christian Religion teaches us, to build them upon unsound Principles, or defend them by Sophistical Arguments; but it is also vain to attempt it, because impossible to execute. The Doctrine of Implicit Faith has lost its Vogue. Every Man will judg for himself, in matters that concern himself so nearly as these do. And nothing is now admitted for Truth, that is not built upon the Foundation of Solid Reason. Let not therefore any sim-

ple-hearted pious Persons be scandalized at these Disquisitions. They are not calculated for their Use. But they are absolutely needful for many others, who are more Curious, and less Religious. And that they may be in some measure useful to the Propagation and Advancement of True Religion amongst such, is the strong Hope, and hearty Desire of the Translator.

THE

THE FIRST LETTER.

YOU are desirous, Sir, that I should inform you more particularly about the thoughts of Mr. *N.* concerning the Inspiration of the *Sacred Writers*; and you ask me if our Friends do not suspect him to be tainted with *Deism*? He that gave me the Essay, which I send you, told me nothing of his other Opinions, nor of his Manner of Life: And for his Thoughts concerning that Divine Inspiration, which the Sacred Penmen received from God, it is conceived that from thence he cannot be concluded to be a *Deist*. It is presumed on the contrary, without entring into the Examination of what he says, that he believes by this Method he better answers the Objections, which the *Deists* and *Atheists* have used to make against the Stile of Holy Scriptures: And it

appears

appears by this Eſſay, that he is far from being of their Opinions.

We ought not always to meaſure, or judg of the extent of any Man's Thoughts, in reference to Religion, by the manner of his explaining or defending them; as if all thoſe who do not defend well their Religion, were Men of ill Deſign, that only ſeemingly defend, in order to deſtroy it. 'Tis ſaid that the impious *Vanini* deſigned to ſhew there is no God, in making as if he would prove there is one. But it does not follow from thence, that all others do the ſame, who defend, or oppoſe, weakly any Opinion. Otherwiſe we muſt believe many Writers both *Catholicks* and *Proteſtants*, who injudiciouſly oppoſe the Opinions of their Adverſaries, and as ill defend their own, to be guilty of ill Deſign. If a Man would make an exact Catalogue of all the Catholick Authors, who have made impertinent Anſwers to the Proteſtants, and have uſed as impertinent Objections againſt them, it would amount to ſeveral Volumes in Folio; and the number of Proteſtant Authors, who have ſucceeded no better, would be little leſs. Nevertheleſs, I do not believe there is any Body ſo unjuſt, as

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to pretend, That the generality of those Authors, on both sides, have been Cheats, who maintained what they did not Believe, or opposed what they did.

You Sir, have too much knowledg of the Frame and Constitution of Man's Mind, to be ignorant, that it is capable of believing in good earnest the most ridiculous things in the World; and, which is yet more astonishing, of giving its Assent at the same time to two things directly opposite. If you should, on purpose, invent the most ridiculous Religion imaginable, there would be People found in *Asia*, whose Opinions would not appear more rational. You have read Mr. *Bernier*'s Travels, and the History of the *Bramins*. What do you think of the Heathens of the great *Mogul*'s Country, and of those famous *Indian* Philosophers? Do you think there is none among them, that believes the monstrous Principles of their *Theology*? For my part I am perswaded there are very few that see the absurdity of it. You will say perhaps, That those Nations are under a blindness, which is next to down-right Foolishness; and that the *Europeans* are

not

not to be judged of by *Indians*. But are there not, in your Opinion, ſome even among the Chriſtians, who believe things abſurd, and againſt all ſort of appearance? The Proteſtants at leaſt do paſs that cenſure upon many of the Roman Catholic Doctrines, as *Tranſubſtantiation, the Infallibility of the Pope, or Council, &c.* And the Catholicks are not wanting to make like reproaches to Proteſtants.

The Catholicks believe, That many Units make more than a ſingle one; and do ſo much believe it, that he would paſs for a Fool amongſt them, as well as amongſt other Chriſtians, that would undertake to deny it; and nevertheleſs they believe that a Million of Humane Bodies, ſeparate from one another, make but One. This is a viſible Contradiction: Yet you know this is their Opinion concerning the Body of Chriſt. There are ſome that aſſuredly believe, That *God is not the Author of Sin*, &c. Who at the ſame time aſſert, That he created Man with a Deſign to let him fall into Sin; as a means to make his Juſtice Eminent, in puniſhing the greateſt part; and his Mercy, in pardoning ſome few. It is evident, that to ſay God ordered Sin ſhould be, on

purpoſe

purpoſe to accompliſh thereby his Ends, is to make him the Author of it. But this is the frailty of Man's Mind, he ſees not theſe Contradictions, becauſe he has been ſo long accuſtomed to ſhut his Eyes, when they are preſented to him.

A Man may then not only defend an ill Opinion that he believes, but alſo believe things abſurd, and even contrary to one another, without being aware. And that's the Reaſon our Friends ſuſpect not Mr. *N.* to be a *Deiſt*, though ſome may think his Opinions favour thoſe that are ſo called. But that you may be able to judg, I ſend you here an abridgment of what he ſays; which one of my Friends imparted to me a while ago.

There are, ſays Mr. *N.* three ſorts of things in Holy Writ, *Prophecies*, *Hiſtories*, *and Doctrines*, which are not aſcribed to particular Revelation.

To begin with the Firſt; God made himſelf known to the Prophets after ſeveral manners; but it ſeems as if they might be reduced to theſe three. They *had Viſions* by Day or by Night; they *heard Voices*; or they were *inwardly Inſpired*. It is not our buſineſs here to examine

examine these things in themselves. We only enquire after what manner they have written that which they learnt by these Visions, by these Voices, or by these Inspirations.

1. Of Prophecies.

Prophecies have been written by God's express Command; by the Prophets themselves, or by others. For we cannot tell whether the Prophets themselves have always Written, or Dictated them; or whether their Disciples have Collected and Written them as exactly as their memory would serve. However it be, we cannot doubt but God made known to the Prophets that which we find in their Books, and that we ought to believe St. *Peter*, when he says, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Pet. 1. 21.

To tell us that which appeared to them in *Visions*, whether it be they themselves that writ it, or others that heard them tell it; there needed nothing but a good memory. A Man has no need of inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen, especially when the impression it made upon him was strong; as commonly hap-

happen'd to those to whom God sent any Vision. Hence it is observed, that every Prophet has his particular Stile; by which it appears that they related what they had seen, as they used to relate other things. Their Stile was the same when they spake by the Order of God, with that which they us'd in their ordinary Discourse.

The same Judgment is to be made concerning the recital of the words they heard. There needed no more but a good Memory to retain them. But we cannot be Assured that they have always recited exactly the very words they heard, and not sometimes thought it sufficient only to tell us the sense. When God told them the Name of some Person, it was necessary they should retain the Syllables of that Name; as when God ordered *Isaiah* to foretel that *Cyrus* should give the Jews liberty to return into *Palestine*, it behoved *Isaiah* to remember those two Syllables, *Coresh*. But there is no likelihood, that in the rest of his Discourse *Isaiah* has related word for word what he heard. The diversity of Stile does moreover prove, that the Prophets expressed after their own manner the sense

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of what they heard. There is, for example, much difference between the Stiles of *Isaiah* and *Amos*. *Isaiah*'s manner of writing is high and lofty. On the contrary, that of *Amos* is low and vulgar; and we find in it divers popular Expressions, and many Proverbs, which sufficiently testify that this Prophet, who was a Shepherd, expressed after his own way what God had said to him. This is the Opinion of St. *Jerom*, in the Preface of his Commentary on this Prophet. * *The Prophet* Amos, saith he, *was skilled in Knowledg, not in Language; for the same Holy Spirit spake in him that spake by all the Prophets.* This Doctrine attributes clearly the expression to the Prophets, and the thing it self to the Holy Spirit; which appears also by the Remark he makes on Chap. III. saying, † *We told you that he uses the Terms of his own Profession: and because a Shepherd knows nothing more terrible than a Lion, he compares the Anger of God to Lions.* St. *Jerom* should have said, according to the common Opinion, that God made use, in speaking to *Amos*, of popular terms, and suitable to his profession, whereas he attributes plainly

* *Amos Propheta fuit imperitus Sermone, sed non Scientia: Idem enim qui per omnes Prophetas in eo Spiritus Sanctus loquebatur.*

† *Diximus illum artis suæ usum Sermonibus: & quia Pastor gregum nihil terribilius Leone cognoverat, iram Domini Leonibus comparat.*

to the Prophet the choice of the Terms in which the Prophecy is expreſſed. * *That words were dictated by God to the Prophets*, (ſays a late Learned Critick) *as it cannot be denied to have been done ſometimes, ſo it does not ſeem to have been done always: And hence it is, that according to the variety of the Times, and the Speakers, the Phraſe of the Prophets is alſo different.*

* *Ut verba à Deo Prophetis dictata ſint, ſicuti interum eveniſſe non eſt negandum, ita non videtur perpetuum. Atque hinc factum eſt ut pro temporum atque loquentium varietate etiam Sermo Prophetarum differret.* Grot. *in Mat.* 1. 22.

But it is commonly alledged, that the Prophets recite the ſame words they heard; Becauſe they introduce God himſelf, ſpeaking, *Thus ſaith the Lord*, &c. That is no Proof. For it is the cuſtom, both of the *Hebrews* and *Greeks*, to bring in always thoſe, whoſe Senſe they relate, as ſpeaking in their own Perſons; though in doing ſo, they tye not themſelves to their words. I will give you a plain Example thereof. It is the different manner in which the Decalogue is ſet down in *Exodus* and in *Deuteronomy*; although God is ſaid to ſpeak perſonally in both places. God ſays in *Exodus*, *Remember the Sabbath day*, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, *Keep the Sabbath-day*, &c. It is in *Exodus*, *To keep it holy. Six days ſhalt thou labour*, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, *To keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six*

days shalt thou labour,&c. It is in *Exodus*, *Nor thy Cattel*,&c. In *Deuteronomy*, *Nor thine Ox*, *nor thine Ass*, *nor any of thy Cattel*,&c. And this Commandment ends thus, *That thy Man-Servant, and thy Maid-Servant, may rest as well as thou*; *And remember that thou wast a Servant in the Land of* Egypt, *and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, thrô a mighty Hand, and a stretched-out-Arm*; *therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day*. In *Exodus*, the reason of keeping the Sabbath, is taken from the Creation of the World in Six Days, without any mention of Slaves, or of the slavery of *Egypt*. There are some other Differences in that which follows, but not considerable. However it appears by this, that either *Moses* in *Deuteronomy*, or the Author of the Book of *Exodus*, did not tie themselves scrupulously to exact words, as the Jews now a-days do; altho both these Authors bring in God speaking personally. *Grotius* has hereupon made this judicious Remark. * *It is to be observed*, says he, *that the Words set down in this place in* Exodus, *were pronounced by an Angel in the Name of God*; *but those which are in* Deuteronomy,

* Sciendum est autem quæ in Exodo hoc loco habentur verba per Angelum Dei nomine prolata, quæ vero sunt Deuter. V. esse Mosis eadem memoriter referentis, & qui-

nomy, *are the words of* Moſes *repeating the ſame things; and that with ſo great liberty, that ſometimes he tranſpoſes words; changes ſome for others of the ſame ſignification; omits ſome as ſufficiently known by thoſe gone before; and adds others by way of Interpretation. The like liberty of changing words is obvious to a careful Reader in other places of Sacred Writ, as* Gen. XVII. 4. *compared with* 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. *compar'd with* 43. Exod. XI. 4. *compar'd with* XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11, *&c. compar'd with* Deut. IX. 27, *&c. Now this ſhews, That we ſhould not catch at words in Holy Writ, as ſome of the Jews do, who fancy that thoſe words in* Exodus, *and thoſe in* Deuteronomy *were pronounc'd in one and the ſame moment of time. They fancy alſo that where there is tranſpoſition, and changing the order of what was ſaid firſt, what laſt; that the laſt importing the ſame ſenſe were alſo ſaid firſt. There are in the Holy Hiſtories*

quidem ea libertate, ut voces tranſponat interdum, quaſdam cum idem ſignificantibus commutet, omittat quædam ſatis nota ex prioribus, addat alia interpretamenti vice. Par mutandi verba libertas & aliis in locis Scripturæ non indiligenti ejus lectori apparet. Ut Gen. XVII. 4. collato 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. collato 43. Exod. XI. 4. collato XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11. & ſeq. collato Deut. IX. 27. & ſeq. Pertinet autem hæc obſervatio eò ne in Sacris Literis ſimus VOCULARUM AUCUPES, ut Judæi quidam, qui & illa quæ in Exodo & quæ in Deuteronomio ſunt verba pariter, uno eodemq; puncto temporis prolata, ſimulq; ubi tranſpoſitio eſt inverſo ordine, quæ prius fuerant dicta & poſterius, poſteriora eundem ſenſum continentia prius etiam dicta ſomniant. Satis multa ſunt in ſacris Hiſtoriis miracula, ut nova extra neceſſitatem, nulloq; uſui comminiſci nihil ſit opus.

ſo many Miracles, that we ought not to invent new ones without neceſſity, and ſuch as are of no uſe.

If you require yet another convincing Proof, that this manner of ſpeaking perſonally, does not denote that they are the proper Words of him that is introduc'd ſpeaking after this manner, you have no more to do but to look into the Goſpels, where the Evangeliſts always make our Saviour to ſpeak perſonally, and yet recite not the ſame words that he made uſe of. For, beſide that Chriſt ſpoke *Syriac* or *Chaldee*, there is oft great difference between their Recitals. The Holy Spirit never tied it ſelf up to words, as many of our Divines do now a-days. He only prompted the Holy Pen-men to give us the true ſenſe of the Words that God made uſe of to make the Prophets underſtand his Will; and it is only in reſpect to the ſenſe, and to the things, that the Apoſtles aſſure us that they were inſpired from God.

The third ſort of *Prophecy*, or manner by which God made known his Will, was by inward Inſpiration, without Viſion, and without Voice. Here-

of

of two different ſorts may be conceiv'd. For either God might inſpire *Prophecies* or *Predictions* word for word, as the Prophets ſhould pronounce them: As when there was occaſion to tell ſome Name, unknown before to the Prophet: Or he might inſpire only the ſenſe, which they might expreſs afterwards in their own way: As moſt commonly it happen'd; the firſt Occaſion being very rare. It ſeems to me, that when any one does apprehend a ſenſe diſtinctly, it is not difficult for him to expreſs it faithfully. And we ought to ſuppoſe, that the Prophets full of the thoughts wherewith God inſpir'd them, had a very clear and diſtinct *Idea* thereof: Which will be eaſily underſtood, if we conſider, that the things wherewith God inſpir'd them were eaſy to be conceiv'd, and proportion'd to the underſtanding of all the World; at leaſt as to the literal ſenſe. It happened alſo ſometimes, that without inſpiring either Words or Senſe, God drew from the Mouth of ſome Perſons, Prophecies which thoſe who ſpoke them underſtood otherwiſe, and did not think them to be Prophecies. He caſt them into certain Circumſtances, and involv'd

them in certain Events, which made them ſay things that were true Predictions, without their knowing them to be ſo. Such was *Caiaphas*'s Prediction, when he ſays, *That it was better that one Man ſhould die for the People, than that the whole Nation ſhould periſh. Now he ſaid not that of himſelf*, ſays St. *John*, *but being High Prieſt that Year, he propheſied.* To ſpeak properly, God inſpir'd him not thoſe words, but the Nature of the Buſineſs they were about in the *Sanhedrim* drew them from him. They were afraid that Jeſus would draw all the People to him, and enterpriſe ſomething againſt the Roman Authority, which would not then fail to ſend a puiſſant Army into *Paleſtine*, and totally waſte it. *Caiaphas* thereupon urges a very common Politic Maxim, *That it were better to deſtroy one Man, though he were innocent, than to expoſe the whole State to utter Deſolation.* In *Caiaphas*'s ſenſe there is nothing of Prophetic or Inſpir'd. But in the Goſpel-ſenſe, that which *Caiaphas* ſaid, ſignifi'd more than he intended, and contained a true Prophecy. It's very likely that more Predictions of this nature may be found in the Old Teſtament.

For

For Example: *David* ſays of himſelf and of his Enemies divers things, without thinking of propheſying, which contain nevertheleſs Predictions of that which ought to happen to Chriſt and his Enemies. He ſays *Pſal.* XLI. 10. *He that ate of my Bread hath lift up his Heel againſt me:* He meant ſurely ſome of thoſe who were riſen againſt him in *Abſolom*'s Conſpiracy, as *Achitophel* or ſome other, and he ſpeaks plainly of a thing happened to himſelf. It is this very thing that inſpires him, if one may ſo ſay, theſe words; which betoken what ſhould befal Jeſus Chriſt by the Treachery of one of his Diſciples, as appears by *John* XIII. 18. The Author of the LXIX*th*, and CIX*th Pſalms*, whether it were *David*, or ſome other, did not probably think of fore-telling what ſhould one day befal a Diſciple of the *Meſſiah*, when he curs'd his Enemies: And yet St. *Peter* in the *Acts* applies ſome words of theſe Pſalms to *Judas*. There needs no great ſharpſightedneſs to ſee that the Author pretended not to ſpeak of *Judas*, and that he was not immediately inſpir'd by the good and merciful Spirit of God, when he ſaid, *Set thou a wicked Man over him, and let Sa-*

Acts i. 20.

tan ſtand at his Right-hand: When he ſhall be judged let him be condemned, and let his Prayer become Sin: Let his days be few, and let another take his Office: Let his Children be Fatherleſs, and his Wife a Widow: Let his Children continually be Vagabonds and beg; let them ſeek their Bread alſo out of their deſolate places: Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the Stranger ſpoil his Labour: Let there be none to extend Mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his Fatherleſs Children: Let his Poſterity be cut off, and in the Generation following let their Name be blotted out: Let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembred with the Lord; and let not the Sin of his Mother be blotted out, &c. It is plain that theſe are the words of a Man full of exceſſive Choler, and of an extream deſire to be revenged. Now the Law of *Moſes* permitted not, any more than the Goſpel, to wiſh ill, or do it, to Children, in revenge of the Injury received from their Parents. Yet ſome famous Divines have put in the Title of this Pſalm, *That* David, As a Type of Jesus Christ, *being driven on by a ſingular Zeal, prays that Vengeance may be executed on his Enemies.* And where do they find that Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt does curſe his Enemies at that rate? Have they forgotten the words that proceeded from his dying Mouth, in favour of the wickedeſt Race that ever was? Thoſe that crucified him, were they not the greateſt Enemies he had, and the moſt obſtinate Adverſaries of the Goſpel? And, far from making the Imprecations againſt them that they deſerved, did not he pray to his Father to forgive them? Has he not ordered us to imitate him, and to pray for thoſe that perſecute us? I cannot underſtand how it can be ſaid, that *David*, as a *Type* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, made ſuch horrible Imprecations againſt his Enemies.

I confeſs, I underſtand not Chriſtian Religion, if it permit the pronouncing ſuch Curſes, and the wiſhing to be revenged after ſo cruel a manner, as does the Author of this Pſalm, and thoſe of divers others, in which we find ſuch like Imprecations; As that of *Pſal.* cxxxvii. *O Daughter of* Babylon, *who art to be deſtroyed; happy ſhall he be that rewardeth thee as thou haſt ſerved us: Happy ſhall he be that taketh and daſheth thy little Ones againſt the Stones!* God forbid that we ſhould deſire to daſh out the Brains of

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Infidel's Children! Yet nevertheleſs we ſee that all theſe Pſalms are indifferently ſung in Proteſtant Churches, without taking notice that they are not all equally inſpir'd. And I remember that asking a Divine, how we could ſing Pſalms full of ſuch Imprecations? He anſwered me ſlightly, that it was lawful to uſe them againſt the Enemies of the Church, and that for his part he made that Application to them, when he ſung theſe Pſalms. Thus you ſee what the Jewiſh Opinion of the Inſpiration of words, and of the Divinity of each Verſe of the Scripture produces.

We may conceive another ſort of *Prophecies*, which conſiſted not in foretelling things to come, but in explaining the Scripture, and in compoſing readily Hymns to the Honour of God. There are ſome Examples of theſe Hymns in the New Teſtament, as that of the bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, and ſome others. It ſeems as if there went only Piety and Zeal to the compoſing them. At leaſt it is very conceivable, that a pious, zealous Man may eaſily now a days praiſe God in that manner, without any Preparation. A good part of the Pſalms ſeems to have been thus compos'd, as alſo di-

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vers other Songs which are in the Old Teſtament. The Pſalms where the Verſes, or the Pauſes, begin with the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, ſeem to have been compos'd at more leiſure. For this Regularity ſhews that there was Meditation and Pains uſed, as is in Acroſticks. See *Pſal.* cxix. and the *Lamentations* of *Jeremy*. So we ſee too, that in this ſort of Works, the Holy Writers do not ſpeak in the Name of God, nor begin their Diſcourſe with, *Thus ſaith the Lord.* Yet we may ſay that the Authors of theſe pious Songs were full of the Holy Spirit, when they compos'd them; that is to ſay, it was a Spirit of Piety that carry'd them to take pains in thoſe Compoſitions; and in that ſenſe we may ſay that they were inſpir'd by God, though not ſo immediately as Predictions. The Spirit of God is often taken for the Spirit of Holineſs, that is to ſay, for a diſpoſition of Spirit conformable to the Commandments of God; as many Learned Men have obſerved.

I will now remark briefly in what manner the Sacred Hiſtories have been written: And then, in treating of Doctrines, I will ſpeak of that ſort of

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Prophecy that consists in explaining the Holy Scripture.

II. *Of the Histories in the holy Scripture.*

It is certain that those who took pains in the Histories of the Old and New Testament, were pious Persons; who had not writ those Histories, but out of a Principle of Piety. It was not to satisfy our Curiosity that they undertook those Works; but to shew us the Care that the Providence of God hath always taken of good People, and the Punishments it inflicts upon the wicked; to give us Examples of Piety and Vertue; and lastly, to inform us of certain matters of Fact, upon which our Faith is founded, and of the Precepts which God had given to Jews and Christians, by the Ministry of his Prophets, Apostles, Angels themselves, and even of his own Son. We ought also to believe that they have given us the Truth of the History to the best of their knowledg, without adding or substracting any thing out of design to deceive us. And as they were very well informed of the principal matters of Fact which they relate, having themselves seen them, or taken them out of good Records, we may be confident that for the

the main of the Hiſtory they tell us nothing that is not exactly true. Theſe Qualifications alone are ſufficient to oblige us to give Credit to them. An Hiſtorian that is honeſt, and well inform'd of that which he relates, is worthy of Credit: And if you add thereto, that he has alſo ſuffer'd Death in maintaining the Truth of his Hiſtory, as the Apoſtles did, who were put to death for maintaining that they had ſeen and heard, that which the Goſpel tells us of Jeſus Chriſt; then not only that Hiſtory will be worthy of Credit, but they who ſhall refuſe to believe it, can paſs for no other than Fools or obſtinate Perſons. In this manner we may be fully aſſur'd of the Truth of the Hiſtory of the New Teſtament; that is to ſay, That there was a Jeſus who did divers Miracles, who was rais'd from the Dead, & aſcended up into Heaven, and who taught the Doctrine which we find in the Goſpels. And this Jeſus having born witneſs to the Hiſtory of the Jews, we cannot doubt its truth, at leaſt as to the principal Matters.

This can not be call'd in queſtion, without abſolutely renouncing Chriſtianity. But People believe commonly two things

things which ſeem to me groundleſs; unleſs they ground them upon Jewiſh Tradition, a Principle, as is well known, extreamly uncertain. They believe, firſt, that the ſacred Hiſtorians were inſpir'd with the Things themſelves: And next, that they were inſpir'd alſo with the Terms in which they have expreſs'd them. In a word, that the holy Hiſtory was dictated word for word by the holy Spirit, and that the Authors, whoſe Names it bears, were no other than Secretaries of that Spirit, who writ exactly as it dictated.

As to what concerns the Inſpiration of Hiſtorical Matters of Fact, I obſerve, Firſt, That they ſuppoſe it without bringing any poſitive Proof, and that conſequently a Man may with good reaſon reject their Suppoſition. They ſay only that if it were not ſo, we could not be perfectly certain of the truth of the Hiſtory. But, beſide that a Conſequence cannot undeniably prove a Fact; and that it may happen that one cannot diſprove a Conſequence, although that which is pretended to be prov'd thereby be not true; I affirm that it is falſe, that we cannot be perfectly certain of the main ſubſtance of a Hiſto-

Hiſtory unleſs we ſuppoſe it inſpir'd. We are, for Example, perfectly certain that *Julius Caſar* was kill'd in the Senate by a Conſpiracy, whereof *Brutus* and *Caſſius* were the Chiefs; without believing that they who have inform'd us hereof were inſpir'd. There are ſuch like matters in the Hiſtories of all Nations, which we cannot doubt of, without being guilty of Folly and Opiniatrety; and yet without ſuppoſing that theſe Hiſtories were writ by Divine Inſpiration.

In the ſecond place, this Opinion ſuppoſes without neceſſity a Miracle, of which the Scripture it ſelf ſays nothing. To relate faithfully a matter of Fact, which a Man has ſeen and well obſerved, requires no Inſpiration. The Apoſtles had no need of Inſpiration to tell what they had ſeen, and what they had heard Chriſt ſay. There needs nothing for that but Memory and Honeſty. Neither had thoſe Authors who writ only the things that came to paſs before their time, as the Author of the Books of *Chronicles*, any more need of Inſpiration for copying of good Records. And as for thoſe who made the Records, there was no more requiſite,

quiſite, than that they ſhould be well inform'd of what they ſet down, either by their Eyes, or by their Ears, or by faithful Witneſſes. It will be ſaid, perhaps, that according to this Opinion, the Faith which we build upon the Scripture will be no other than a Faith purely *human*, becauſe it will be grounded only upon Human Teſtimonies. To this I anſwer, That neither do we know, any more than by a *Human Faith*, that the Book which we call the Goſpel of St. *Matthew* is truly his. It is nothing but the uniform Conſent of Chriſtians, ſince the beginning of Chriſtianity to this day, that makes us believe it; which in truth is no more than a Teſtimony purely *Human*. We do not believe it becauſe we are aſſur'd of it by an Oracle from Heaven, which has told us that this Book is truly that Apoſtle's; but on the ſame account that we believe that the *Eneid* is truly *Virgil*'s, and the *Iliad Homer*'s. But that which they here call *Human Faith* is of as great certainty, as the Demonſtrations of Geometry. And even *Divine Faith* it ſelf, as they call it, is built upon this Certainty. For, in truth, we do not believe in Jeſus Chriſt, but becauſe

cauſe we are perſwaded that the Hiſtory we have of him is true. And how do we know that this Hiſtory is true? Becauſe Eye-witneſſes have written it, and have ſuffer'd Death to maintain the truth of their Teſtimonies. And how are we certain that theſe were Eye-witneſſes, and that they ſuffer'd Death rather than deny what they ſaid? By Hiſtory; that is to ſay, by the Teſtimony of Men, who affirm it to us conſtantly from the time of the Eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Religion to the Age we live in. So that *Human Faith* is found to be the ground of *Divine Faith*. But we need not fear that this Foundation is not ſolid enough. For without ceaſing to be a Man, and reaſoning no more than a Brute, it cannot be diſputed; as has been made appear by many Learned Men, who have written of the Truth of Chriſtian Religion.

In the third place; The common Opinion is contrary to the Teſtimony even of the Sacred Writers. St. *Luke* begins his Goſpel after this manner. *Foraſmuch as many have taken in hand to ſet forth in Order a Declaration of thoſe things, which are moſt ſurely believed*

among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were Eye-witneſſes, and Miniſters of the Word: It ſeemed good to me alſo, having had perfect Underſtanding of all things from the very firſt, to write unto thee in order, moſt excellent Theophilus, *that thou mighteſt know the certainty of thoſe things wherein thou haſt been inſtructed.* You may obſerve in theſe words a Confirmation of what I have been ſaying, and a full Proof that St. *Luke* learn'd not that which he told us by Inſpiration, but by Information from thoſe who knew it exactly. Now if you allow St. *Luke* to have ſo faithfully related to us the Life and Diſcourſes of Jeſus (without having been particularly inſpir'd) that we ought to receive what he tells us with an entire belief in his Fidelity; you ought not to make any difficulty to grant the ſame concerning the other Hiſtorians of the Scripture. If any of them ought to be inſpir'd, certainly they were the Evangeliſts. And if you will have another Example of a Hiſtory written without Inſpiration, you have but to read the Books of *Kings*, and of the *Chronicles*, being Extracts out of publick Regiſters, and out of particular

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Writings of divers Prophets, to whom the Authors at every turn refer the Reader.

Laſtly, It is very plain that the Hiſtorians of the Scripture were not inſpir'd; by the Contradictions that are found in ſeveral Circumſtances of their Hiſtories. The Evangeliſts agree perfectly among themſelves in what concerns the main of the Hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt, but there are ſome Circumſtances wherein they diſagree; a clear proof that every Particular was not inſpir'd. For although the Circumſtances wherein they differ are things of ſmall Conſequence, yet if the holy Spirit had dictated all to them, as is pretended, they would perfectly agree in every thing; theſe Circumſtances being as well known to God as the main of the Hiſtory. For Example; St. *Matthew* ſays, *That* Judas, *repenting that he had delivered our Lord to the Jews, threw the Mony into the Temple; that going away he hang'd himſelf; and that the Prieſts, having gathered up the Mony, bought therewith a Field.* St. *Luke* in the *Acts* brings in *Peter* ſaying, *That* Judas, *after having purchaſed a Field with the Reward of Iniquity, falling headlong, burſt aſunder in the midſt, in-*

ſomuch that his Bowels guſhed out. Here is a manifeſt Contradiction, which the Learned in vain endeavour to reconcile. And there are many other ſuch like.

But this, you will ſay, leſſens very much the Authority of the *Evangeliſts*: For if they could be deceiv'd in any thing, who will ſecure us that they were not deceiv'd in every thing? I anſwer to that in the words of *Grotius*;

* *Even this it ſelf ought to free theſe Writers from all Suſpicion of Deceit. For thoſe who teſtify Falſhoods, uſe ſo to agree their Stories, that there may not ſo much as ſeem to be any difference. But if becauſe of any ſmall Diſagreement, although it could not be reconcil'd, whole Books ſhould loſe their Credit, then no Book, eſpecially of Hiſtory, would deſerve to be believed; whereas the Authority of* Polibius, *and* Halicarnaſſenſis, *and* Livy, *and* Plutarch, *in whom ſuch things are found, as to the main ſtands firm among us.* St. *Chryſoſtom* alſo in his firſt Homily on St. *Matthew*, very plainly

* Imo hoc ipſum Scriptores illos ab omni doli ſuſpicione liberare debet; cum ſoleant illi qui falſa teſtantur, de compacto omnia ita narrare, ut ne in ſpeciem quidem quicquam diverſum appareat: Quod ſi ex levi aliquâ diſcrepantiâ, etiam quæ conciliari nequiret, totis libris fides decederet, jam nulli libro, præſertim Hiſtoriarum, credendum eſſet; cum tamen Polybio & Halicarnaſſenſi, & Livio & Plutarcho, in quibus talia deprehenduntur, ſua apud nos de rerum ſumma conſtet autoritas.

plainly assures us, that God permitted the Apostles to fall into these little Contrarieties; that we might see that they were not agreed to feign a History at Pleasure; and that we might more readily believe them in the main of the History. When a Man has seen most of the Things which he relates, in those he can hardly be deceiv'd. But he may be easily deceiv'd in some Circumstances of Things which he has not seen.

We might yet add a fifth Proof, which *Grotius* affords us, in his Notes on that part of his Treatise of the *Verity of the Christian Religion*, which I lately cited. It is, that the Evangelists, in setting down a certain time, do not determine it exactly; because they did not know it so precisely that they could set down the number of Days or Months. See *Luke* I. 56. III. 23. *John* II. 6. VI. 10, 19. XIX. 14. You find in those places, *About a certain Time*; or, *About a certain Number*: Which shews evidently, that the History was not dictated immediately by the Holy Spirit, who knew exactly the Number and the Time that was in question.

It is clear then, in my Judgment, that the Things were not Inſpir'd; nor by conſequence the Words; which are leſs conſiderable than the Things. It is not certain Terms that are the Rule of our Faith; but a certain Senſe. And it is little matter what words we make uſe of, provided we go not aſtray from the Doctrine which God has reveal'd. Thoſe who read the Originals, are in no better way of being ſav'd, than thoſe that can read only the Tranſlations. For there is no Tranſlation ſo falſe, but that taken in groſs, it expreſſes clearly enough that which is neceſſary to Salvation. Otherwiſe it would be neceſſary that all Chriſtians had learn'd *Hebrew* and *Greek*, which is altogether impoſſible; and we ſhould exclude from Salvation, almoſt all thoſe who have made profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion in our Weſtern Parts, from the Time of the Apoſtles, to the Age we live in.

That Providence alſo which has preſerved us theſe Holy Books, to lead us in the way to Salvation, ſo many Ages after the death of thoſe that writ them, has preſerv'd inviolably nothing but the Senſe. It has ſuffer'd Men to

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put in Synonimous Words one for another; and not hinder'd the ſlipping in of a great many Varieties, little conſiderable as to the Senſe, but remarkable as to the Words and Order. There is in St. *Matthew*, for Example, more than a thouſand divers Readings in leſs than eleven hundred Verſes; but whereof there is not perhaps fifty, that can make any change in the Senſe; and that change too is but in things of little importance to piety. If God had thought it neceſſary, for the Good of his Church, to inſpire into the Sacred Hiſtorians the terms which they ought to uſe, he would undoubtedly have taken more care to preſerve them. It is plain therefore that he deſign'd principally to preſerve the Senſe.

Thus then neither the Words, nor the things, have been inſpir'd into thoſe who have given us the Sacred Hiſtory; altho in the main that Hiſtory is very true in the principal Facts. It may be, that in certain Circumſtances, little conſiderable, there may be ſome Fault; as appears ſufficiently by the contradictory Paſſages. It is true, that ſome have ſtrain'd themſelves to reconcile thoſe Paſſages, as I have already obſerv'd; but it is after ſo vio-

lent and constrain'd a fashion; and there are such divers Opinions about these Reconciliations; that if we examine the thing never so little, without prejudice, we shall find that the Learned trouble themselves to no purpose; and that they would do much better to confess ingenuously, that there are some Contradictions in things of small importance.

Nay further, I know some that believe we ought not to receive all the Jewish Histories, without distinction, for true Histories. They pretend we ought to except the Book of *Esther*. And it is true, that if *Assuerus*, of whom the Book of *Esther* speaks, be *Ochus* that raign'd after *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, this Book would have been written at such a time as there was no Prophet in *Israel*. But altho Mr. *Cappel* pretend that *Achasueros* is the same with Ωχος, his conjecture is not unquestionable. They pretend also, that this History has all the Characters of a History made at pleasure. I shall not examine that at present. But however it be, it is no Heresy to reject a Book of the *Jewish* Canon; as neither is it to reject one of our own. At least, the Protestants

teſtants have not call'd a *Lutheran* an *Heretick*, for having ſaid that the Epiſtle of St. *James* is an * *Epiſtle of Straw*; no more than they have many of the Learned, for not receiving the Second Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, which a famous Critic ſtiles, † *A Fiction of ſome ancient Chriſtian miſimploying his leaſure-Time.* The *Jewiſh Sanhedrim* may eaſily have received into their Canon Books that had no Divine Authority.

* Straminea Epiſtola.

†Commentum veteris Chriſtiani otio ſuo abutentis. *Joſ. Scaliger.*

III. *Of the Doct. of the Scriptures, and Inſpiration of the Apoſtles.*

To come now to the Doctrines which are in the Holy Scriptures, and not there attributed to a particular Revelation; I will begin with examining thoſe which are in the Writings of the Apoſtles, after which I will paſs to thoſe of the Old Teſtament.

It is commonly believed, that the Apoſtles, as well as the Prophets, were inſpir'd both as to Words and Things. Yet with this difference, that the Prophets were not always inſpir'd, but only when God gave them order to ſpeak to the People in his Name. Whereas the Apoſtles were always inſpir'd, without being raviſht into Extaſies, as the Prophets were before their propheſying. This Opinion is founded upon the Promiſe

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that Christ made his Apostles to send them the holy Spirit, which he performed on the Day of *Pentecost*. The words of Christ are, *John* XVI. 13. *When he, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, he will guide you into all Truth.* He says also elsewhere to his Apostles; *When they bring you into the Synagogues, and unto Magistrates, and Powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say,* Luk. XII. 11. These are two the most formal Passages that can be quoted in this Matter. It is requisite that we examine them with some attention, to see if they prove that which they are produc'd for; *viz.* 'That the Apostles 'were honour'd with a continual pre-'sence of the Holy Ghost, who dicta-'ted to them all that they said in mat-'ter of Religion; insomuch that all 'their words ought to be considered as 'Oracles.

To begin with the latter; I observe first, That he does not promise a perpetual Inspiration, but only upon certain Occasions; *viz.* when the Apostles should be brought before the Tribunals of Judges. So that if there were nothing

nothing elſe in it, this Paſſage would not at all favour the common Opinion: But there is more in it: for it wholly deſtroys it. If Jeſus Chriſt had reſolv'd to give his Apoſtles the Holy Spirit to inſpire them perpetually, he would not have told them ſingly, that they ſhould not trouble themſelves for what they had to ſay before the Judges, becauſe then the Spirit ſhould ſpeak in them. But he would have ſaid that they need not fear that at any time they ſhould want words, becauſe the holy Spirit ſhould accompany them without ceaſing, as well before the Powers of the World, as when they ſhould ſpeak to the People. If a Man had a Deſign to ſupply another with Mony for all his Expences; Would he ſay to him, Do not trouble your ſelf to get Mony for the Journies you are to take, for you ſhall then be ſupplied? He would rather ſay to him, doubtleſs, that he ſhould not fear to want Mony, becauſe he ſhould be ſuppli'd conſtantly for all his Occaſions. A Man promiſes not for a particular Occaſion, that which he intends to give alike at all Times. And when a Man makes a particular Promiſe, it is a plain ſign that he intends to perform it but upon certain Occaſions. In

In the second place; As I acknowledg that the Apostles may have had Prophetick Inspirations on certain Occasions, and that in effect they have had them; so I confess that I find my self tempted to believe, that by these words, *The Holy Ghost shall teach you in that hour what ye ought to say:* Or, as St. *Matthew* has expressed it, *It is not ye that speak, it is the Spirit of your Heavenly Father that speaks in you*; I am, I say, tempted to believe, that by these words Christ meant only to say this; *viz.* The Spirit of Courage and Holiness, which the Gospel produces in your Hearts, will teach ye what ye ought to say. That is to say, That the Apostles had no more to do, but to believe in the Gospel, to be assur'd that the Disposition of Spirit which that Heavenly Doctrine would give them, would never let them want words; not even when they were to defend themselves before the Tribunals of the greatest Powers. That which inclines me to this Explication of Christ's words, is, that in comparing this Promise with the Event, it seems not to have been performed in any other sense than that which I have now observ'd; and that neither ought it to be inter-

interpreted ſo ſtrictly, as if on theſe Occaſions a Word might not ſlip from the Apoſtles, that were not conformable to the Spirit of the Goſpel.

St. *Luke* tells us, *Acts* XXIII. that St. *Paul* having been brought before the *Sanhedrim*, began to ſpeak after this manner; *Men and Brethren, I have liv'd in all good Conſcience before God until this day.* Here is nothing yet that one might not ſay without Inſpiration; as neither is there any thing but what is conformable to the Goſpel. But what follows is a ſign of Paſſion, wherewith neither the Spirit of Prophecy, nor the patient Spirit of the Goſpel inſpired St. *Paul.* At that word, ſays St. *Luke*, Ananias *the High Prieſt commanded them that ſtood by, to ſmite him on the Mouth.* The Apoſtle, provok'd by this Injuſtice, anſwers him angrily, *God ſhall ſmite thee, thou whited Wall. For ſitteſt thou to judg me according to the Law, and commandeſt thou me to be ſmitten contrary to the Law? And they that ſtood by*, ſays St. *Luke*, *ſaid to* Paul, *Revileſt thou God's High Prieſt? Then ſaid* Paul, *I wiſt not Brethren that he was the High Prieſt: For it is written, Thou ſhalt not ſpeak Evil of the Ruler of thy*

thy People. It is plain, me-thinks, that if the Spirit of Prophecy had inſpir'd St. *Paul* with the beginning of this Diſcourſe; it did not ſo neither with the Anſwer he made the *High Prieſt*; nor with the Excuſe he made uſe of afterward when they told him he was the High Prieſt that he ſpoke to. He gave Sentence againſt himſelf by his Anſwer, ſuppoſing that he had known him who order'd him to be ſmitten. And as for the Excuſe, it is plain it is not very good; becauſe the Goſpel allows not to revile any Man, whether he be a Magiſtrate, or a private Man. *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſays St. *Peter*, *has ſuffered for us, leaving us an Example that we ſhould follow his ſteps; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, threatned not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

Neither do I believe that the Spirit of Prophecy inſpir'd St. *Paul* with what he ſaid afterward: At leaſt there is no Body but could have ſaid as much, without Inſpiration. *Now St.* Paul *knowing*, ſays the Hiſtorian, *that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Phariſees, cried out in the Council, Men and Brethren, I am a Phariſee, the Son of a Phariſee: of the Hope and Reſurrection of the Dead, I am*

called

called in question. This expression also of St. *Luke*, (*Paul knowing*) makes it evident that his Speech was an Effect of his Prudence, rather than of Prophetic Inspiration.

I am not the first that has made such-like Observations. St. *Jerom* in his Dialogue against the *Pelagians*, Lib. 3. brings in *Atticus*, who bears the part of an Orthodox Doctor, speaking of St. *Paul*; * *Do you think St.* Paul, *at that time when he writ*, (The Cloak which I left at *Troas*, when thou comest bring with thee, and the Books, but especially the Parchments) *did think of the Heavenly Mysteries, and not of those things which are useful to Humane Life, and necessary to the Body*, &c? *The Apostle is struck by an Officer, and he falls foul upon the High Priest that commanded him to be smitten*: God shall smite thee thou whited Wall. *Where is that patience of our Saviour, who as a Lamb led to the Slaughter open'd not his Mouth, but answered mildly to him that struck him?*

If

* Putasne Apostolum eo tempore quo scribebat; *Lacernam sive penulam, quam reliqui Troade veniens affer, ac libros & maximè membranas*; de cœlestibus cogitasse misteriis & non de his quæ in usu communis vitæ vel corpori necessaria sunt, &c? Cæditur Apostolus à Ministro, & contra Pontificem qui cædere imperaverat sententiam dirigit: *Percutiet te Deus Paries dealbate.* Ubi est illa patientia Salvatoris qui quasi agnus ductus ad victimam non aperuit os suum, sed clementer loquitur verberanti? *Si malè loquutus sum argue de malo, si autem benè quid me cædis?* Non Apostolo detrahimus, sed gloriam domini prædicamus, qui in carne passus carnis injuriam superat & fragilitatem. Ut taceam illud quod commemorat; Alexander Ærarius multa mihi mala ostendit: reddet illi Dominus in die illa Justus Judex.

If I have ſpoken Ill, convince me of the Ill; but if Well, why do you ſtrike me? *We do not detract from the Apoſtle, but we declare the Glory of our Lord; who ſuffering in the Fleſh, overcame the difficulties and weakneſſes of the Fleſh. Not to mention what he ſays in another place.* Alexander *the Copper-ſmith did me much Evil; the Lord, the Righteous Judg, will reward him in that day.* It is true, St. *Jerom* elſewhere diſapproves a part of that which here he makes his Orthodox Doctor ſpeak; but it is plain, at leaſt, that one might ſpeak it without being guilty of Hereſy.

Laſtly; When we examine the Diſcourſes which we have of Chriſt's Diſciples before divers Judges, we may eaſily perceive that they ſpeak with much Piety and Courage; but it ſeems not that they ſay any thing which one might not as well ſay without Inſpiration. If we read the Hiſtories of thoſe that have been put to death for Religion in the laſt Ages, we ſhall find many that were not Prophets, making excellent Diſcourſes at their Trials, without being prepar'd before-hand. St. *Stephen* was full of the Goſpel-Spirit, when he made the Harangue we read

Acts

Acts VII. It ſeems nevertheleſs, that he therein mix'd divers Circumſtances of Hiſtory, which were nothing to the purpoſe of the matter he ſpoke about; and which neither can tolerably be reconcil'd with the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament. And indeed very learned Men have been of Opinion, that St. *Stephen*'s Memory fail'd him. Mr. *Cappel* in his *Spicilegium* on *Verſ.* 16. ſays: * *It is certain that in this place we ſhould read* ὁ τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ, *and underſtand* ἐκεῖνος, *that it might not be ſaid* Abraham, *but his Grandchild* Jacob *bought this Monument. Or we may ſay, that* Stephen, *by the fault of his Memory, confounded two Facts that were ſomewhat alike, to wit, the Purchaſe made by* Abraham, *whereof* Gen. XXIII. *with that made by* Jacob, *Gen.* XXXIII. 19.

However, it is no ways incongruous, that by the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, we ſhould underſtand the Spirit of Holineſs and Conſtancy, which the Goſpel gives; or ſuch a diſpoſition of Mind, as is an Effect of our Faith. We know it is a manner of ſpeaking common in the Old and New Teſtament; and that the *Hebrews* call the *Spirit of Jealouſy*, the *Spirit of Stupidity*,

* Certum eſt hoc loco legendū eſſe ὁ τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ, ſub audiendumq; ἐκεῖνος, ut hic dicatur non ipſe Abraham, ſed ejus nepos Jacob emiſſe monumentum illud; vel dicendum eſt Stephanum lapſu MNHMONIKΩ duo ſimilia facta confudiſſe, emtionem nempe ab Abrahamo factam de qua Gen. c. XXIII. cum eâ quæ à Jacobo facta eſt, de quâ Gen. XXXIII. 19.

the *Spirit of Fear*, the *Spirit of Courage*, the *Spirit of Meekneſs*, &c. the different diſpoſitions of Mind, that render a Man Jealous, Stupid, Fearful, Couragious, Meek, *&c.* The Criticks have obſerv'd this long ago.

But I muſt needs deſire you once again to take notice, that when I ſay the Diſciples of Chriſt had not Prophetic Inſpirations, for anſwering before the Tribunal of Judges, to the Accuſations brought againſt them; I do not mean thereby that it never ſo fell out; but only that ordinarily they ſpoke without particular Inſpiration. I conceive indeed, that if one of them had appeared before a Judg, whoſe Language he naturally underſtood not, it would have been neceſſary that God ſhould have dictated to him the proper words he was to make uſe of. And I doubt not but God has often done even that, in favour of ſuch of the Apoſtles as have preach'd the Goſpel to barbarous Nations beyond the Limits of the Roman Empire, and perhaps too ſometimes amongſt the *Romans* and *Greeks*.

However it be, it ſeems to me that if what I have been ſaying be conſider'd, it muſt be granted that the Paſſages of St.

St. *Luke* and St. *Matthew*, where Chriſt promiſes his Spirit to his Diſciples, are not ſtrong enough to render the common Opinion indiſputable.

This, Sir, is about half the Writing which was given me concerning the thoughts of Mr. *N.* on this Subject. It is too long to make an end of tranſcribing it at preſent. But you ſhall have the reſt by the next Poſt: upon condition you will promiſe me to peruſe it carefully, and give me your ſenſe of it. It were extreamly to be wiſhed, that ſome able and judicious Perſon would undertake to handle this Matter thorowly, in oppoſition to our Author, but without Heat and Paſſion. This Opinion is maintain'd by ſo many Proofs, and Arguments that ſeem ſo ſtrong; that tho I know it may be render'd very odious, and that very malicious Conſequences may be drawn from it; yet I muſt confeſs I do not know by what Principles it can be overthrown. And that which gives this Author yet more advantage, is, That this Matter has been ſo little handled, that all the Writings upon the Scripture to this day afford us ſcarce any light therein. A Man muſt fetch all out of his own Stock, to anſwer

him. And it is no ſmall trouble to have one's Mind continually exerciſed in clearing up the Difficulties of a Subject ſo little known, and giving clear Principles in ſo obſcure a Matter.

I would be glad, Sir, that there were any in your Province, or elſewhere, that would undertake to clear it: for I know none of my Friends here that will ingage in it. If you could prevail with ſome learned and moderate Divine to take that task in hand, without railing as Divines too often do, when they know not how to anſwer their Antagoniſt, you would infinitely oblige thoſe who have read this little Writing.

I am, *&c.*

THE

THE SECOND LETTER.

I Am not ſurpriz'd, Sir, at your deſire to ſee the latter part of that Writing, whereof I ſent you the former by laſt Poſt, before your are willing to give me your Judgment on it. A matter ſo important and ſo delicate requires to be conſidered with much Attentiveneſs. We muſt lay aſide then once again the Examination of the critical Hiſtory, to reſume it next Poſt. For I cannot tranſcribe the reſt of the Writing of Mr. *N.* and entertain you at the ſame time upon any other Subject. Mr.—— whom you mention, is well qualified to inſtruct his Flock in matters of Piety, but has not, I doubt, Learning ſufficient, nor Parts ſtrong enough to maſter the Difficulties that attend the anſwering directly, and by poſitive Arguments, a Writing which ſome other very able Divines dare not

meddle with. It were better, in my Judgment, not to anſwer at all than to anſwer ill; and to ſeek only to defame an Author whom one cannot confute. I ſhould be the more troubled to ſee that done, by how much I underſtand that the Author is a very pious Man, and one who aſſuredly believes not the evil Conſequences, which ſome Men, (too ready to judg of their Neighbours) may draw from his Notions. I fear that he you ſpeak of would content himſelf in gathering together a great number of thoſe odious Conſequences, and would think that he had thereby ſufficiently refuted the Opinion, without conſidering, that tho a Man cannot diſingage a Doctrine from the abſurd Conſequences that by ſome may be link'd to it, it does not therefore follow that the Doctrine is falſe. It ſhould firſt be made appear that the Arguments brought for an Opinion are not ſolid; and after that one may come to the Conſequences. Otherwiſe while the Arguments that prove an Opinion ſubſiſt in full force, all the Conſequences that may be deriv'd from it cannot overthrow it. Nevertheleſs if you believe him capable to acquit himſelf of this

this undertaking, you may perſwade him to it when you think fit. But put him in Mind at the ſame time, that it is the part of an honeſt Man, and of one that would beſtow his Pains to ſome good purpoſe, to do it with all the Moderation and Meekneſs imaginable. St. *Jerom* commends *Nepotien*, * *That he uſed to hear willingly, anſwer modeſtly, allow Truth, not ſharply confute Error, and teach rather than conquer whom he diſputed with.* And it were to be wiſhed that our Divines now adays would make it their buſineſs to deſerve ſo good an Elogy; whereas it ſeems that they ſtrive only to attain to the Name of great Railers, and value not Peoples having an ill Opinion of their Manners, provided that they paſs for Men of Parts. I ſpeak not this as if I ſuſpected that Mr. —— reſembles one of thoſe Divines I find fault with; but becauſe I believe a Man cannot be too much caution'd againſt ſo general a Defect.

* Quod ſoleret libenter audire, reſpondere verecundè, recta ſuſcipere, prava non acriter confutare, diſputantem contra ſe magis docere quam vincere.

But theſe Moralities would carry me too far, if I ſhould give my ſelf the liberty to purſue them. It is better that I keep my word with you, and give you the following part of that Writing. And here it is.

Continuation of the Writing of Mr. N. concerning the Inſpiration of the Apoſtles.

Let us now examine that Paſſage of St. *John*, *When the Spirit of Truth ſhall come, he will lead you into all Truth.* Interpreters obſerve that we muſt not underſtand by *All Truths*, any others than thoſe which the Apoſtles were ignorant of, and which it was needful for them to know, that they might be able to acquit themſelves as they ought to do of their Charge. They receiv'd not the holy Spirit to learn, for Example, that there was a God; nor to be inſtructed in the Mathematicks. They knew already this firſt Truth, and of the other they had no need.

The generality of Interpreters believe that theſe words denote a perpetual Aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, that made the Apoſtles abſolutely infallible. To know whether they are in the right or no, we muſt examine the Accompliſhment of the Promiſe; and if it appear that it agrees not with this Explanation of our Saviour's words, we muſt ſeek another ſenſe, and try to diſcover wherein the Infallibility of the Apoſtles conſiſts.

We find a Story *Acts* xv. whereby it appears manifeſtly that the Apoſtles did not paſs in their own time for Perſons, whoſe every word was an Oracle,

as

as they are now reputed to have done. Some Jews converted to the Chriſtian Religion, not being able to ſhake off their ancient Opinion concerning Ceremonies, would have had the *Gentiles* circumcis'd. St. *Paul*, and St. *Barnabas* were againſt this: but their Authority was not ſufficient to put to ſilence the Judaizing Chriſtians. Altho St. *Paul* was as much an Apoſtle, as thoſe whom our Lord had choſen while he was on Earth, yet they would not believe him. The Church at *Jeruſalem* muſt be conſulted.

Further alſo, the Apoſtles and Elders of the Church, being aſſembl'd to examine and determine this Affair, diſpute a great while before they agree upon it; and it was not till after they had heard St. *Peter*, St. *Paul*, St. *Barnabas*, and St. *James*, that the Aſſembly came to a Reſolution. If they had been fill'd with the Spirit of Infallibility, ſuch as is conceiv'd now adays, they would have been all at firſt of one Mind; and there would have needed no more to be done, but to charge one of them to give out the Oracle in the Name of the whole Aſſembly.

There

There happen'd likewiſe, before that, another thing related by St. *Luke*, *Acts* x. which makes it alſo very evident, that the Holy Ghoſt which the Apoſtles receiv'd the day of *Pentecoſt*, had not taught them all they ought to know, (ſo far was it from rendring them at firſt daſh infallible) and that they were not then conſider'd as Perſons out of danger of falling into Error, as they have been ſince accounted. St. *Peter* needed a Viſion, as appears by the Story of *Cornelius* the *Centurion*, to learn that he ought not to ſcruple preaching the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*; although Chriſt had order'd his Apoſtles before his aſcending into Heaven, *to preach the Goſpel unto all Creatures*; whereby he clearly enough denoted the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews*.

St. *Peter* after having obey'd the expreſs Order which he receiv'd from God, to preach the Goſpel to *Cornelius*, was no ſooner returned to *Jeruſalem*, but the faithful Ones of the Circumciſion, not dreaming that his Apoſtleſhip render'd him infallible, diſpute with him; and tell him, after a manner that ſhows that the Infallibility which we now attribute to him, was to them unknown,

known, *Thou wenteſt unto Men uncircumcis'd, and didſt eat with them.*

Many Years, as it ſeems, after that, *Peter* being at *Antioch*, had not the Courage to maintain openly, that the Jews might eat with the Gentiles without ſcruple. *For before that certain Perſons came from* James, *he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come he withdrew, and ſeparated himſelf, fearing them which were of the Circumciſion: And the other Jews diſſembled likewiſe with him*, inſomuch that St. *Paul* obſerving, *that they walked not uprightly, was obliged to tell* Peter *before them all, If thou being a Jew liveſt after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compelleſt thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* It is ſaid that St. *Peter* was guilty of a fault only in his Conduct, and not in his Doctrine; that he believ'd and maintain'd the ſame with St. *Paul*, but that on this occaſion he diſſembled his Opinion; and that he did not otherways conſtrain the *Gentiles* to live as the *Jews*, but in abſtaining to eat with them. The *Gentiles*, ſay they, ſeeing that St. *Peter* did not eat with them becauſe they were uncircumcis'd, did, by reaſon of this his Conduct, believe themſelves oblig'd

to

to be circumcis'd, and consequently to observe the other Ceremonies of the Law. They believ'd that it was a Sin to continue uncircumcis'd, because St. *Peter* forbore to live familiarly with them on that account; and on the contrary that it was a Duty to observe the Circumcision. So that it was by his Conduct only that St. *Peter* forc'd them to live as *Jews*. And indeed it is true that by efficaciously engaging one to do a thing, after what manner soever it be, we are said to force one to do it. See *Gen.* xix. 3. *Luke* xxiv. 19.

I believe really that this is the best Explanation. But it proves clearly that the Metaphysical Infallibility which is attributed to the Apostles is not of Apostolick Tradition. For, in truth, to dissemble a true Doctrine when they ought to preach it, and to ingage People in an Error by their Conduct, is visibly a human Weakness, and which becomes not those who are look'd upon as the simple Instruments of the holy Spirit speaking by their Mouths. St. *Peter*'s Conduct gave the *Gentiles* to understand, as well as if he had told it them, that they must observe the Circumcision; and to give them

to

to underſtand it by forbearing to eat with them, was almoſt the ſame thing as to tell it them by word of Mouth. Nay more, it is not unlikely that St. *Peter* believed that this Diſſimulation was lawful, as well as St. *Barnabas*, and the other *Jews* who had followed his Example; otherwiſe it is not credible that ſo pious Men, who were the firſt Miniſters of the Goſpel, would have done it. And ſo we muſt confeſs that they were guilty of ſome weakneſs even in Doctrine, although they recanted it ſoon, nor was it of great importance.

There is alſo a great difference obſervable in the manner of Chriſt's ſpeaking (*He that had received the Spirit without meaſure*) and that in which the Apoſtles expreſs themſelves; whereas according to the common Opinion it ought to be the ſame. If the ſame Spirit had render'd them infallible, they had right to declare to the World the Doctrine of Salvation with the ſame Power, and to ſpeak as authoritatively as Jeſus Chriſt. But we ſee the contrary in their Writings. Chriſt ſpoke *as one having Authority. You have heard it was ſaid of old*, &c. *But I ſay unto you*,

you, &c. The Apoſtles, on the contrary, declare that they ſay nothing of themſelves, and refer all to the Prophets, and to Jeſus Chriſt: *Acts* xxvi. 22. 1 *Cor.* xi. 23.

And that which is yet more conſiderable is, that they diſtinguiſh manifeſtly that which they ſay themſelves from that which Chriſt had ſaid. *And unto the married, I command, yet not I, but the Lord*, &c. *But to the reſt ſpeak I, not the Lord*, &c. So St. *Paul* ſpeaks, 1 *Cor.* vii. 10, 12. which he would not have done, had he been aware that his Auditors had believ'd his words as infallible as the words of Chriſt.

Methinks theſe are convincing Proofs that the Apoſtles had not a perpetual Inſpiration, which might give their words an indiſputable Authority. I do not deny but they had many immediate Inſpirations, and divers Heavenly Viſions; as appears by the *Acts*, by the *Revelations*, and by divers other places of Scripture; Nay, I am ſo fully perſwaded they had, that I think him no good Chriſtian who doubts of it. But the Queſtion here is concerning an uniform, conſtant and ordinary Inſpiration

ration, as it is commonly explained in the Divinity-Schools.

It may be you will say there are divers Arguments for this sort of Inspiration as strong as those I have brought to shew the contrary. The Apostles began their Letter *Acts* xv. after this manner, *It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* By which it appears, say some, that they were fill'd with the Spirit of Infallibility, which dictated to them what they ought to say. I desire first, that those who say so, reconcile this Supposition with the Dispute that was among the Apostles, before they came to this Conclusion. In the second place: It is ~~not likely~~ *absurd* that if the Holy Ghost had possess'd them in such a manner, that they had been only simple Instruments by which He express'd his Will, they ~~should~~ would not have plac'd themselves in equal Rank with ~~the~~ Him; but ~~would~~ should have said simply, It has appear'd good to the Holy Ghost, who speaks by us. What Prophet ever said, it seem'd good to God and to me? In the third place; Suppose there be here, as the Critics say, a Figure by which is express'd one and the same thing by two words; and that this manner of speak-

ſpeaking amounts to no more but this, *It has ſeemed good to us who are full of the Holy Ghoſt*; The perpetual Inſpiration about which I am now arguing cannot be hence concluded. The Apoſtles and all the Church of *Jeruſalem* were animated by the Spirit of the Goſpel, without being continually full of the Spirit of Prophecy. If it were otherwiſe, we ſhould be forced to ſay that the whole Church of *Jeruſalem*, not only the Apoſtles, but alſo the Elders of the Church, and all thoſe who were aſſembled, were perpetually accompanied with a Spirit of Infallibility; which no body ever yet ſaid, nor is it at all likely. In the fourth place; The Concluſion of the Letter they write, ſeems extreamly weak for the Concluſion of a poſitive Law. FROM WHICH YOU SHALL DO WELL TO KEEP YOURSELVES. A Prophet under the Old Teſtament would have ſaid, *From which keep your ſelves*; for ſo ſaith the Lord, whoſe Commandments you cannot ſlight without your own Deſtruction, *&c.*

Some may alſo here object the Spirit of *Miracles* and *Tongues*, which the Apoſtles received the day of *Pentecoſt*. But the Effuſion of that miraculous Spirit did not neceſſarily render all thoſe that re-

receiv'd it infallible in Doctrine. Otherwiſe all the Chriſtians of that time had been infallible. The Church of *Corinth* had receiv'd the Holy Ghoſt, as appears by the Epiſtles St. *Paul* directs to it; and ſo ſhould not have needed that Apoſtle's Inſtructions, becauſe it had a great number of infallible Perſons within it ſelf: But it appears, on the contrary, that it needed his Inſtructions, not only to correct its Vices, but alſo to reſolve its Doubts, and even to rectify its Errors.

Thus then the Spirit of Miracles not being accompanied with Infallibility, it connot be concluded, becauſe the Apoſtles receiv'd that Spirit the day of *Pentecoſt*, that they became as Gods; and that they were out of all danger of ever falling into the leaſt Error. But what ſignify then theſe words; *When the Spirit of Truth ſhall come, he will lead you into all Truth?* This Spirit of Truth is it not the miraculous Spirit which the Apoſtles receiv'd?

I have already obſerv'd that theſe words cannot be underſtood rigorouſly, as if the Apoſtles had known all Sciences. I muſt add further, that there is ſomething extreamly figurative in them; as ap-

pears by the following words, *For he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak; and he shall shew ye things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.* What Opinion soever a Man may be of concerning the Holy Spirit, it is plain that these words cannot be taken properly, as if the Holy Spirit had heard from God, or Jesus Christ, that with which he ought to inspire the Apostles.

The most simple sense, and most conformable to the accomplishment of this Promise, which can be given to these words, is, to my thinking, this. I should explain many things to you more clearly than I have done, but you are not yet in condition to receive them as you should. When you shall have received the Spirit of Miracles, he will teach you the rest that you ought to know, either by Visions, or by making you call to mind that which I have told you, so that he will make you apprehend the sense, and will teach you what you ought to do afterwards. To speak

properly,

properly, he will tell you nothing new; he will but recal into your memory, to make you better understand it, the Doctrine of my Father; which is the same that I have taught you; and which I may also call my Doctrine, because my Father has charg'd me to preach it, as the only Doctor of his Church.

The Holy Spirit *led the Apostles into all Truths; and took that which was Christ's, without ever speaking of himself*; in making them call to mind that which they had forgotten; and in making them understand on divers occasions, or even by extraordinary Revelations, that which Christ had said to them, but which they then understood not. This is plainly that which Christ teaches us in these words; *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you* ALL THINGS, AND BRING ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID UNTO YOU, *John* XIV. 25. These last words apparently explain the foregoing, *He shall teach you all Things.*

In effect, there is nothing in the Doctrine of the Apostles, which Christ

had not told them; and in leaving them, he gave them no other order for the preaching of the Goſpel, but *to teach all People to obſerve all thoſe things which he had commanded them.* And the Apoſtles obſerve in ſeveral places, that it was not till after they had received the Holy Spirit, that they remember'd, and underſtood divers things which Chriſt had told them when he was here below. *Theſe things underſtood not the Diſciples at the firſt*, ſays St. *Joh.* XII. 16. *but when Jeſus was enter'd into his Glory, then remember'd they that theſe things were written of him.* See the ſame Evangeliſt, II. 22. and *Acts* XI. 16.

This is, in my Opinion, the ſenſe of Chriſt's words; at leaſt I find nothing among the Interpreters, that anſwers ſo well to the Event; which thorowly convinces me that Chriſt muſt have meant ſome ſuch thing. For when all's done, whatſoever may be ſaid, the Promiſe ought to be underſtood by its correſpondency with the Accompliſhment, and there is no better Interpreter of Prophecies than their execution.

This being ſo, the Infallibility of the Apoſtles, according to my judgment, conſiſted in this. They knew clearly the

the general Principles of the Jewiſh Religion, which had been taught them from their Cradle; they had heard Chriſt often tell what the Goſpel added to Judaiſm; or if you will, Chriſt had explain'd to them more clearly the Will of God, and had ſhown them the Errors of the *Phariſees*; He had inſtructed them concerning the *Meſſiah*, and had made appear to them by many Proofs, that himſelf was *HE*; God had rais'd him from the Dead, and they had convers'd with him after his Reſurrection; and in the laſt place, they had ſeen him aſcend into Heaven, from whence he aſſur'd them he would come one Day to judg the Quick and the Dead. They preach'd faithfully that which they had heard, that which they had ſeen with their Eyes, that which they had obſerv'd with attention, and that which they had touch'd with their Hands. They could declare, without any miſtake, what they had ſeen; they could preach what they had heard. For the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt was compris'd in a few Articles, plain enough to be underſtood, and conſequently eaſy to be remembered. Thus they related infallibly what they had ſeen and heard;

and therein it is that their Infallibility consisted. Perhaps also the Spirit of Miracles which Christ sent them, strengthned their Memories, and open'd their Minds after a manner we comprehend not. But it is certain, as I have made it appear, that this Spirit directed them not in so miraculous a manner, as to make it necessary for us to regard all they said or writ with the same respect as the words of Jesus Christ, the only Master, and the only infallible Doctor that ever was amongst Men. He was the only Mystical Ark, in which *the Godhead dwelt bodily*, from whence proceeded nothing but Oracles.

Some may ask, perhaps, Whether it might not so happen that the Apostles might abandon the Truth of the Gospel, and preach a false Doctrine; and if it might be so, how we can be assur'd that they were not Deceivers? I confess, that though it was very unlikely, that after having receiv'd so many Illuminations and Graces, they should fall into Apostacy; yet it was not absolutely impossible. But in that case God would not have approv'd by Miracles the Doctrine they taught; and thereby it is that we may know they were no Seducers.

Seducers. There crept in, during their Time, many false Prophets among the Christians; but they were presently discover'd, because they could not maintain by Miracles, a Doctrine contrary to that of the Apostles, which was confirm'd by an infinity of Wonders. God made appear, by those Prodigies, that the Apostles declar'd nothing but what was conformable to his Will, nor any thing that could be hurtful to Piety; for it is impossible that God would favour a Doctrine which should turn Men from Holiness. But we must not believe neither, as I have already observ'd, that because God wrought Miracles in favour of any Person, it therefore follows that all things pronounced by that Person, were immediately inspir'd, and ought to be receiv'd as the infallible Decisions of him that never errs. Provided that Person maintained the Substance of the Gospel, and said nothing but what conduced to Piety, God would not cease to bear Witness to his Doctrine, although all his Reasonings were not Demonstrations. God would not that this Mark of his Approbation should be interpreted, as if he had thereby declared that he would

have all the Words of those that had miraculous Gifts receiv'd as Oracles. To be fully convinc'd hereof we need but read the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

I must nevertheless ingenuously confess, that there is mention made in this Epistle of some miraculous Gifts, which seem to have been pure Inspirations; and which ought to make the Speakers attended unto, as if they were the simple Interpreters of the Holy Spirit. *The Spirit*, says St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. VII. 8. *gives to one the word of Wisdom, to another the word of Knowledg.* It seems as if he meant thereby the Gift of prophesying; that is to say, of instructing others in Piety; of which he says many things in the XIVth Chapter of the same Epistle. This seems contrary to what I have been saying concerning the Inspiration of the Apostles, and I confess I cannot see how, according to my Notion, this difficulty can be clearly solv'd. I might say that this Gift of Prophecy was perhaps no other than a Disposition of Mind, which God infus'd sometimes into those on whom he bestow'd it, by which they became fit to instruct; although he in-

ſpir'd them not extraordinarily with that which they were to ſay; which is ſo much the more likely, by how much this Gift was preſerv'd and increas'd by Study and Reading, as appears by thoſe words of St. *Paul* to *Timothy*. Firſt Epiſt. Chap. IV. 13, &c. *Until I come, give thy ſelf to Reading, to Exhortation, to Inſtruction: Neglect not the Grace which is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, through the Impoſition of the Preſbytery: Meditate on theſe things, be always imployed, to the end thy Improvement may be known of all Men.* Now it is plain that the Gifts which are owing to an actual and immediate Inſpiration of the holy Spirit, ſuch as curing Diſeaſes, *&c.* could not be increas'd by Application of Mind, as not depending upon Man in any ſort. The moſt aſſiduous Study cannot contribute any thing to prophetick, or immediate Revelations.

This Conjecture ſeems probable enough. And indeed I ſee no other way of explaining what St. *Paul* ſays to *Timothy*. But without determining any thing concerning the Gift of Prophecy, it appears plainly by what St. *Paul* ſays, 1 *Cor.* XIV. that it conſiſted not in an imme-

immediate Revelation of the holy Spirit, that forced the Prophets to ſpeak. He there gives them this Advice; *Let the Prophets ſpeak two or three, and let another judg; but if any thing be revealed to one of thoſe that ſits by, let the firſt hold his Peace: for ye may all propheſy one by one, to the end that all may learn, and all may be comforted: And the Spirits of the Prophets are ſubject to the Prophets.* The Prophets whom the holy Spirit had inſpir'd immediately with what they ought to ſay, had no need of this Advice. Nay it had even been ridiculous. Becauſe the holy Spirit inſpiring them with what they had to ſay, would have inſpired them likewiſe as to the occaſion and the place, and would not have put many Perſons on ſpeaking at one time in the ſame place, nor ſo as to interrupt others who ſpake by his Inſpiration. Moreover St. *Paul* would have *the Prophets judg one another, and that the Spirits of the Prophets be ſubject to the Prophets*; which cannot be underſtood of Prophets immediately inſpir'd, who are ſubject to none but God, and who are to give account to none but him. The Prophets of the Old Teſtament ſpoke as long as God inſpir'd them; after

which

which they held their Peace, without needing any Advertiſement; becauſe they eaſily perceiv'd when the Inſpiration ceas'd.

It ſeems to me that we may now conclude, that there never was any body but our Saviour, who had a conſtant and perpetual Inſpiration, and all whoſe words we ought to receive as Oracles. As he alone amongſt Men was incapable of ſinning, ſo it was he alone whom God indow'd with an abſolute Infallibility. The ſame Light which perpetually inlighten'd his Mind, regulated alſo the Motions of his Affections: otherwiſe it would be difficult to conceive how he could chuſe but be ſubject to Error, if he had been ſubject to Sin. There is ſo great a Correſpondence between the Mind and the Affections, that it is not almoſt poſſible there ſhould be any Irregularity in the one, without a diſorder in the other.

But that you may not believe I am the firſt Author of this Opinion, and that it is a deſire to appear ſingular, or an Affectation of Novelty that has ingag'd me in this Notion, I muſt alſo let you ſee that

ſome

some great Men have been of the same Mind before me. St. *Jerom* makes this Observation upon the fifth Chapter of the Prophet *Micah*, in speaking of this Passage; *And thou* Bethlehem Ephratah, *though thou be little among the thousands of* Judah, *&c.* which St. *Matthew* cites otherwise than it is either in the Hebrew or Septuagint. * *There are*, says he, *that affirm there is the like Error in almost all the Testimonies that are taken out of the Old Testament; that either the Order is chang'd, or the Words, and that sometimes the Sense it self differs; the Apostles or Evangelists not transcribing the Testimonies out of the Book, but trusting to their Memory which sometimes fail'd them.* It is true, St. *Jerom* says not that he approves this Opinion, but he makes it appear elsewhere that he is not very far from it. In his Letter to *Pammachius* (*de optimo genere interpretandi*) of the best way of interpreting; He gathers together many Examples of the New Testament, by which he shews that the Apostles tie themselves more to the Sense than to the Words; and maintains, with good reason, that we should not play the Criticks on them for it,

* Sunt qui asserunt in omnibus pœnè testimoniis, quæ de veteri Testamento sumuntur, istiusmodi esse errorem; ut aut ordo mutetur, aut verba, & interdum sensus quoq; ipse diversus sit; vel Apostolis vel Evangelistis non ex libro carpentibus Testimonia, sed memoriæ credentibus, quæ nonnunquam fallitur.

nor

nor even for the places where they have miſtaken Names. After having compar'd the Quotation *Matth.* XXVII. 9. with the Original, he adds; † *One may accuſe the Apoſtle of falſity in that he agrees neither with the Hebrew nor with the Septuagint; and which is more, that he is miſtaken in the Name, putting* Jeremy *for* Zachary. He ſeems indeed elſewhere to diſapprove that Opinion; but it is uſual with him to accommodate himſelf to the common Opinion, and yet not omit to give his own; without being concern'd whether he contradicted himſelf or no. When he ſpeaks as others do, you muſt not conclude preſently that he is of the ſame Opinion with them, becauſe it may be he ſpeaks ſo by way of Condeſcenſion; whereas when he ſays the contrary, it ſeems rather that he ſpeaks his own Thoughts. You need but read what he ſays of the Diſſimulation which he attributes to St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* (in his Commentary upon the ſecond Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Galatians*, and in his Anſwer to St. *Auſtin*) to ſee that he believ'd that St. *Paul* by a Prudence purely human (which he calls

† Accuſent Apoſtolum falſitatis quod nec cum Hebraico, nec cum Septuaginta congruat Tranſlatoribus, & quod his majus eſt, ERRET IN NOMINE, pro Zacharia quippe Jeremiam poſuit.

calls a *Dispensation*) made shew of believing that St. *Peter* was in the wrong; insomuch that when St. *Paul* says *that St.* Peter *was to be reprov'd, because he walked not uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel*; it was not that he believ'd so, but only to hinder the converted *Gentiles* from imitating that Apostle. I say not that St. *Jerom* was herein in the right; but at least it hereby appears that he believ'd not that the Apostles were mov'd by a perpetual Inspiration to write what they did. We may joyn with St. *Jerom*, *Origen*, (from whom he had this Opinion concerning the Dispensation that he attributes to these two Apostles) and divers *Greek Fathers*, who also followed *Origen*; as St. *Jerom* writing to St. *Austin* observes, in the Apology he makes for this part of his Commentary.

Thus you see that the most able Interpreters of Scripture, that Christian Antiquity has had, have been of the same Opinion with me. I may also say that the most Learned Criticks of these last Ages have believ'd the same thing, since *Erasmus* and

and *Grotius* have publickly maintain'd it; those two great Men, who are beyond dispute in the first Rank amongst the Moderns that have concern'd themselves in writing on the Bible. (——*Quorum se pectore tota Vetustas Condidit, & major collectis viribus exit.*)

Erasmus upon the second Chapter of St. *Matthew* says thus, * *St.* Jerom *abhors the Imputation of Falshood to the Apostles, not that of slips of Memory. Nor is the Authority of the Scripture forthwith questionable because they differ in Words or Sense, as long as the main of the Matter treated of, and that wherein our Salvation depends, is clear. For as that Divine Spirit, that govern'd the Mind of the Apostles, suffered them to be ignorant of some things, to make Mistakes, and to err (either in Judgment or Affection) without any damage to the Gospel; nay it improves that failing to the help of our Faith; so it is not unlikely that it so influenced the Faculty of their Memory that*

* Falsitatis crimen abominatur Hieronymus in Evangelistis, τὸ μνημονικὸν ἁμάρτημα, memoriæ lapsum non item. Neq; enim continuò forte vacillet totius Scripturæ autoritas, si cubi varient vel in verbis vel in sensu, modo summa consistet earum rerum de quib. agitur, & unde cardo pendet nostræ salutis. Ut enim Spiritus ille Divinus, mentium Apostolicarū moderator, passus est suos ignorare quædam, & labi, errare; neq; alicubi, judicio sive affectu, non solum nullo incommodo Evangelii, sed hunc etiam ipsum errorem vertit in adjumentum nostræ Fidei; ita fieri potuit ut sic temperarit organum Apostolicæ memoriæ ut eti-

etiamsi quid humano more fugisset, id non solum non deroget fidei Divinæ Scripturæ, verum etiam fidem arroget apud eos, qui alioqui de composito scriptum calumniari poterant. Quod genus sit, si nomen pro nomine sit positum, id quod alicubi factum fatetur Hieronimus, aut si quid non suo narretur ordine, &c. Solus Christus dictus est veritas, unus ille caruit omni errore.

* Neq; verò necesse est, opinor, quicquid fuit in Apostolis protinus tribuere miraculo. Homines erant, quædam ignorabant, in nonnullis errabant.

† Passus est errare suos Christus etiam post acceptum Paracletum; at non usq; ad fidei periculum:

that though something after the manner of Men might scape them, yet that should not only not derogate from the Credit of the Holy Scripture, but might even gain Credit to it, with those who otherwise might be apt to slander it as written by Confederacy. Of this sort is that of putting one Name for another, which Jerom *confesses to be somewhere done; or of relating things out of order,* &c. *Christ only is stiled the Truth, He alone was free from all Error.* He says also upon *Acts* X. * *Neither do I think it necessary to attribute every thing that was in the Apostles to a Miracle. They were Men, some things they were ignorant of, in some they were mistaken.* He maintains likewise the same Opinion at large in his Epistles, (*lib.*2.*Ep.*6.) against *Eckius*, who had blam'd him in a Letter he had written to him; and he thus concludes all that matter, † *Christ suffer'd his own to err, even after they had receiv'd the Comforter; but without danger of Apostatizing from the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith; even as at this day we confess the Church may err without that danger. And to con-*

conclude; how do you know, whether Christ would not that this compleat Praise should be kept only for himself, who stiles himself alone the Truth? As he alone was without Spot or Blemish of Sin, according to the Opinion of the Antients, so perhaps he only was beyond all exception true.

lum: Quemadmodum & hodie fatemur Ecclesiam labi posse citra discrimen tamen Pietatis ac Fidei. Deniq; qui scis an hanc laudem omnib. modis absoluram sibi servari voluit Christus, qui se unum Veritatem dixit? Ut unus ille absq; ævo Innocens, juxta veterum opinionem, ita fortassis unus citra omnem exceptionem verax.

Nothing could be said more formally upon this Subject. But *Grotius* who speaks not so plainly, is not wanting for all that to explain himself sufficiently; giving us to understand that all that the Apostles said was not, in his Opinion, immediately inspir'd. * *Paul*, says he in his Appendix to his Commentary concerning Anti-Christ, *in two places*, 1 *Thess.* IV. 14. and 2 *Cor.* XV. 22. *speaking of the Resurrection, divides those that are to rise again into two kinds; Those who are already dead, and those who shall be alive at that time: But of this last number he makes himself one, using this Pronoun We: And in that to the* Corinthians, *We that shall be alive; as much as to say, he made account that the Resurrection would happen within the time of his Life;*

* Paulus duobus in locis 1 Thess. IV. 14. & 2 Cor. XV. 22. de Resurrectione agens, resurrecturos in duo dividit genera, in eos qui præmortui erunt, & in eos qui vivent eo tempore; his autem se accenset, utens pronomine

 speak- *nostri*

ἡμεῖς, & in illa ad Corinthios, ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες, nimirum quod existimaret ad id usq; tempus fieri posse ut resurrectio accideret intra illud spatium quo ipse erat victurus; loquens hac in re non δογματικῶς, sed στοχαστικῶς, ut de itinere per Hispaniam: Rom. XV. 28. & alibi sæpe. Sicut Prophetæ, ita & Apostoli non de omnib. habuere Revelationem: In quib. Revelationem non habent, aut nondum accepere, de iis loquuntur στοχαστικῶς quomodo homines cæteri. Exempla habemus, 1 Sam. XVI. 6. 2 Sam. VII. 3.

speaking herein not dogmatically, but conjecturally; as he does also concerning his Journey into Spain, *Rom.* XV. 28. *and frequently in other places. As not the Prophets, so neither had the Apostles constant Revelations in all things. And the things in which they had not receiv'd Revelation, of those they speak conjecturally as other Men. We have Examples thereof* 1 Sam. XVI. 6. 2 Sam. VII. 3.

Episc. Instit. Theol. lib. 4. Sect. 1. §. 4. p. 232.

The ablest Divine among the *Arminians* was also of this Opinion, as you may see by consulting the place in the Margent; but to ease you of seeking it, if you are not at leisure, or want convenience, I will transcribe some of the words. † *It is not absurd to grant* (says he) *that the holy Spirit may have left the Writers of the sacred Books to the common Condition of Mankind, and to their own Frailty, in relating those things that belonged to the Circumstance of a Fact, for which*

† Nihil vetat ut concedamus Spiritum Dei sanctum reliquisse Scriptores sacrorum librorum humanæ conditioni, & fragilitati suæ, in narrandis istis quæ ad circumstantiam facti pertinebant, ad quæ sufficiebat sensata notitia & memoria, quanquam ea lapsui erat obnoxia.

which a due Knowledg, and Memory was sufficient; even altho that was subject to failing. He says also a little lower; * *It is better, and would perhaps cause less Scandal, to acknowledg freely and willingly a light failing of Memory (that so we may not seem to favour things writted and absurd) rather than to make use of absurd Interpretations in excuse of lighter failings. Otherwise the suspicion of a failing is not only not avoided, but it is increased; and because the Fault is not acknowledged, it seems as if Truth were not in good earnest sought by us, but that Obstinacy were for some reason or other made use of; which ought to be look'd upon as the greatest Reproach imaginable to Professors of the Christian Religion.* He shows afterwards, That it follows not, because the Apostles might be deceived in things of small importance, that therefore they could fall into any considerable Error for want of Memory. And the principal Reason he gives is, For that the Fundamental Doctrines depend not on a Circumstance, which they

* Sacius enim potiusq; est, & calumnia minus obnoxium forte esset liberaliter lubenterq; levem lapsum memoriæ agnoscere, ne manifestè absurdis & contortis favere videamur, quam absurdâ nimis interpretatione uti ad lapsuum leviorum excusationem; alioquin suspicio lapsus non modo non tollitur, sed augetur; & quia culpa non agnoscitur, non bonâ fide veritas à nobis quæri sed pertinacia pro quilibet causâ indui videtur; quod non potest, ac non debet videri Christianæ Religionis Professorib. esse quam probrosissimum.

they could forget; nor have they any thing in them obſcure, or hard to be retain'd; *Which is ſo true*, ſays he, *that I make no difficulty to affirm, That if any one ſays there is a Senſe in the Scripture neceſſary to Salvation, which appears at firſt contrary to Reaſon, we ought thereby to judg he attributes to the Scripture a Senſe it has not. And this is what I believe, and am convinc'd of by reading the ſacred Books.*

I confeſs that the moſt part of Divines now a days are of a contrary Opinion. But as I pretend not to oblige any body to approve my Judgment by the Authority of thoſe I have quoted, ſo neither do I hold my ſelf obliged to ſubmit to the Authority of a crowd of Learned Men, who do but ſay the ſame thing one after another, without ever examining or bringing Reaſons for it.

We muſt however obſerve here two things of very great importance, which are not ordinarily reflected on: The firſt is, That in one Controverſy which we have with the Roman Church, our Divines do all agree, that we ought not to have ſo much regard to Words as Things; for, upon ſuppoſition that in the Apocryphal Books there is nothing

thing contrary to Piety, they ſay that the Controverſy about them is not conſiderable. Now if there be no danger in believing Expreſſions to be divine that have nothing in them but human, when the Doctrines therein contain'd are not contrary to the reveal'd Truth; What danger can there be in believing that any Truths which we acknowledg to be Divine, are expreſs'd in Terms not divinely inſpir'd? The ſame reaſon that makes us believe there is no danger in the one, perſwades us alſo there is none in the other. It is becauſe we are not ſav'd by the Words, but by the Things.

The other thing obſervable is, that we receive amongſt the Canonical Books of the New Teſtament, Writings whoſe Authors are not well known; which we could not do, if we thought it neceſſary, in receiving a Book as Canonical, to be aſſur'd that every Word was inſpir'd; ſince to be aſſur'd thereof we ſought to have evident Proofs that it was a Man inſpir'd by God who was the Author of that Book. For Example, it is not known who writ the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, whether it were an Apoſtle, or ſome Diſciple of the Apoſtles; ſo that we cannot

know whether the words of that Epistle were inspir'd or not. But for all that, it is receiv'd; because it is certain it was written in the Apostles time, and because it contains nothing that is not perfectly conformable to their Doctrine. Thus it is generally thought of little importance, whether the words be divinely inspir'd or no, provided the things they express be true. So that one may say, that in truth Divines are generally very favourable to the Opinion I maintain, although themselves are not aware of it.

I do not think it necessary to insist much in proving that God has not always dictated to the Apostles the very words that they used, since it is evident that he did not always dictate to them the things. Not that I make any doubt but he has often reveal'd to them the things, and even inspir'd them with the very words, as in the Prophecies, where there was need to remember divers Names, and when they spoke strange Languages. Tho it may nevertheless be suppos'd, that (as to what concerns the Gift of Tongues) God dispos'd at once the Brains of them that receiv'd it, in such a manner that they could without trouble joyn certain Sounds to certain Ideas, just as they would have done if they had

had been us'd to it from their Infancy; and that afterwards he left them at liberty to make use of those new Languages according as they should think fit. And thus those that learn'd by Inspiration the Language of the *Medes*, for Example, had their Brains dispos'd in the same manner as they would have had if they had learn'd that Language from their Infancy, and could make use of it as easily as their Mother-Tongue. At least it is evident that some who had receiv'd this miraculous Gift did sometimes abuse it; which they would not have done, if they never had spoken those Languages but by present immediate Inspiration. See 1 *Cor.* XIV.

But without determining that Point, I believe, with *Erasmus*, that the Apostles learn'd not the Greek they us'd by Inspiration; because if it were so, they would have spoke it like the Native Grecians; whereas they mix'd with it a world of Hebraisms, as the *French* that speak Latin do Gallicisms. See *Erasmus* upon *Acts* X.

Not that I believe, neither, that they had learn'd the Greek Language by the Commerce they had with the Greeks during the Functions of their Charge, as

Eraſmus thought probable; it is more likely they had learn'd it from their Infancy. For St. *Paul* who was born in *Cilicia*, where they ſpoke nothing but Greek, undoubtedly had learn'd it young; but he corrupted it afterwards by his long dwelling in *Judea*; where beſides the Greek, they ſpake a broken Chaldee, whoſe Dialect mixing with the Greek render'd it obſcure and difficult, ſuch as is the Stile of that Apoſtle.

The others that were born in *Judea* had learn'd it alſo from their Infancy, as it was commonly there ſpoken; that is to ſay, extreamly corrupted by the ancient Language of the Country, which was ſtill ſpoken there, as appears by divers places of the New Teſtament. This the ſame *Eraſmus* has well obſerv'd in the places already cited: * *When I excuſe the Apoſtles*, ſays he in his Letter to Eckius, *who learn'd their Greek not out of* Demoſthenes *his Orations, but out of the Diſcourſe of the common People, I deny not their Gift of Tongues; nor does it thence follow that they might not learn Greek by common Con-*

* Dum excuſo Apoſtolos, qui Græcitatem ſuam non ex orationib. Demoſthenis, ſed ex vulgi colloquio didicerint, non nego donum linguarum; neq; tamen inde ſequitur eos non potuiſſe Græcè diſcere ex vulgi colloquio: Certè Syriace didicerant ex vulgi col-

Converſe. Aſſuredly they learn'd the Syriac by common Converſe. Why might they not in like manner learn the Greek? For (by means of Alexander *the Great, and the Roman Empire*) Ægypt, *and the greater part of* Syria, *and all the leſſer* Aſia, *nay almoſt all the Eaſt, as* Jerom *ſays, ſpoke Greek. And I cannot think that the holy Spirit made them to forget what they had formerly learn'd.* The Greek Language then was ſpoken in *Judea*, together with the ancient Language vvhich the Jews brought from *Babylon*, that is to ſay the *Chaldean*; but corrupted in proceſs of time, as the *French* and *Flemiſh* are ſpoke together now adays in *Flanders*. And as the *French* they now ſpeak in *Flanders* is full of the *Flemiſh* Dialect, and of Terms unknown in *France*, ſo the Greek of *Judea* vvas heretofore full of Chaldaiſms, and of barbarous ways of ſpeaking, which undoubtedly grated the Grecian's Ears.

colloquio; quidni potuerunt & Græcè? quandoquidem ob Alexandrū Victorem, & Romanum Imperium, Ægyptus ac Syriæ maxima pars, totaq; minor Aſia, imò totus fere Oriens, ut loquitur Hieronimus, Græcè loqueretur. Neq; enim arbitror Spiritum illum oblivione oblitaſſe quod antea didicerunt.

The Hiſtory of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, that tells us in ſeveral places that Hebrew or Chaldean was ſpoken in *Judea*, tells us alſo that they us'd another Language, which could be no other than Greek. St. *Luke* obſerves *Acts* XXII. that St. *Paul* haranguing the Jews

Jews, began to ſpeak to them in Hebrew, and that *when they underſtood him ſpeak to them in the Hebrew Language, they hearken'd to him with the greater ſilence*; which gives us to underſtand that he might have ſpoke to the People in another Language; for otherwiſe there had been no ground to obſerve that they liſtn'd more attentively, when they perceiv'd he ſpake Hebrew; ſeeing that in ſpeaking any other Language but Hebrew they could not have underſtood him. It appears then that Greek was ſpoken in *Judea*, and it is likely *Pilat* ſpoke Greek to our Lord, and that our Lord anſwer'd him in the ſame. The People only preferr'd the Language of the Country before the Greek, which was not ſo ancient, and which they had not learn'd but by force, becauſe of the Kings of *Syria* that tyranniz'd over them; and ſo they ſpoke it not exactly.

It is true, there were *Jews* that ſpoke Greek very purely; but they were ſuch as were born in Countries where only Greek was ſpoken, as *Philo*; or they had acquir'd a habit of ſpeaking good Greek by reading or ſtudying, as *Joſephus*. So at this day there are *Walloons* that ſpeak French very well, (altho the generality

rality of that People speak it extreamly ill) because they have taken much pains to correct in themselves the Faults which others commit, they have apply'd themselves to reading, or they have travell'd in *France*. These Jews born in the Countries where nothing but Greek was spoken, understood not the ancient Hebrew, nor the Hebrew then spoken in *Judea*. They made use in their Synagogues of the Version of the *Septuagint*, and because they spoke nothing but Greek, they were call'd the *Hellenist Jews*. *Salmasius* in his Book of the *Hellenist Tongue*, against *Heinsius*, shows that these Jews spoke very good Greek; and that it is very absurd in some Learned Men to imagine there was an *Hellenist Tongue*; as if the Hebrews that knew not their own Language, had a particular one different from that of the places where they dwelt; and that this Language was that of the *Septuagint* and of the New Testament. If a Name were to be given to this corrupted Greek, it should rather be call'd *Hebraistic*, because it is full of Hebraisms, or Chaldaisms. But as the Language of the *Walloons*, or of some of the Provinces of *France*, cannot pass for a particular Language,

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being nothing but a corrupted *French*, so neither ought the barbarous Greek of *Judea* to pass for a Language by it self, different from the Greek Language.

It is no wonder then if the Apostles, who had liv'd a good part of their Lives in *Judea*, or who were born there, and had not apply'd themselves to learn perfectly the Greek Tongue, nor to speak it in purity, use it so improperly in their Writings. St. *Paul* himself, born in a Town that spoke nothing but Greek, had so corrupted his Speech by his long dwelling in *Judea*, that he confesses, *he was ignorant in the Language*, 2 Cor. XI. 6. as sufficiently appears by all his Epistles, the Greek whereof is very different from that of *Josephus*. And therefore the Greek Fathers have complain'd of the obscurity of his Stile, of the barbarous Phrases that are therein, and of apparent Confusion in the order of his Discourses; and those who very readily understood *Plato* and *Demosthenes*, were oblig'd, as *Erasmus* judiciously observes, to take great pains to understand St. *Paul*. We need but compare his Stile with that of some Greek Author, to find that this Apostle ap-

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ply'd himſelf not much to the Greek Eloquence.

It is plain then that the holy Spirit inſpir'd not the Apoſtles with the Expreſſions they were to uſe. If it had been ſo, St. *Paul* could not have ſaid, *he was ignorant in the Language*. He ſhould have ſaid, that the holy Spirit inſpir'd him with a Language ſuch as was that of the People. And all the Greek Fathers would have blaſphemed againſt the holy Spirit, when they obſerv'd the little Eloquence of St. *Paul*: for according to this Suppoſition, that would not have proceeded from St. *Paul*, but from the holy Spirit. If any one doubt of this, he need but read *Eraſmus*, in the places I have cited. It is true, that a famous Proteſtant Divine has undertaken to confute him, in his Annotations upon the 10*th* Chapter of the *Acts*; but he does nothing but declame, as he is us'd to do, againſt an Author more learned and more judicious than himſelf, without bringing any ſolid Reaſon.

We muſt now ſpeak a word of ſome Books of the Old Teſtament, that contain neither Hiſtory nor Prophecy; ſuch are the Books of *Proverbs*, *Eccleſiaſtes*, the Song of *Solomon*, and *Job*; which laſt

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is apparently a Dramatic Piece, where-of nothing but the Subject is true; as are the Tragedies of the Greek Poets.

There is no Proof that what is contained in the *Proverbs* was inspir'd to *Solomon* by God, after a Prophetic manner. They are Moral Sentences, which a good Man might well pronounce, without Inspiration; as are those contain'd in *Ecclesiasticus*. There are very many of them that are but vulgar Proverbs, which carry indeed a good Sense, but have nothing in them of Divine. There are a great many Directions about Oeconomy, which Women and Country-People every-where know without Revelation. See Chap. XXIV. 27. and XXVII. 23. and the Description of a vertuous Woman at the latter end of the Book. The Name of Prophet is very liberally bestow'd on *Agur* the Son of *Jakeh*, for some Moralities that are found under his Name: *Prov.* XXX. Whereas I dare be bold to say better things might have been said without the Spirit of Prophecy. *Three things*, says he, for Example, *are too marvellous for me, and even four which I know not; The way of an Eagle in the Air, The way of a Serpent on a Rock,*

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The way of a Ship in the midſt of the Sea, and the way of a Man with a Maid. One muſt have a mean Opinion of the Spirit of Prophecy, to believe that it dictated ſuch things as theſe. And indeed neither does the Author pretend to that Eminency; but ſays modeſtly concerning himſelf, That *he is more brutiſh than any Man, and has not the Underſtanding of a Man.*

But there is particularly one Precept of good Husbandry, that is often repeated, which our Merchants now adays know, as well as the *Iſraelites* that liv'd in *Solomon*'s time. It is that which expreſly forbids them to be Surety for any body, Chap. VI. 1. XVII. 18. XX. 16. XXII. 26. XXVII. 13. It is true by the Rules of good Husbandry a Man ſhould never be Surety, but there happens oftentimes Caſes wherein Charity ought to be preferr'd before good Husbandry; as appears by the Parable of the *Samaritan*, who became Surety for the Expence of the Jew, that was found hurt on the Road. There is, methinks, no great need that God ſhould ſend Prophets to teach Men good Husbandry; on the contrary it was very neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould preach Liberality.

Some

Some Learned Men have believ'd that *Eccleſiaſtes* is a Dialogue; where a pious Man diſputes with an impious one who is of the Opinion of the *Sadduces*. And in effect there are things directly oppos'd one to another, which it cannot be ſuppos'd the ſame Perſon ſpeaks. The *Epicurean* Concluſion (*To eat, drink and be merry, becauſe a Man has nothing elſe*) which is up and down in many places of this Book, is altogether contrary to that Concluſion at the end of the Work; *Fear God, and keep his Commandments*, &c. But it is extreamly difficult to diſtinguiſh the Perſons, or to find out exactly in the Name of what Perſon the Author ſpeaks in every Paſſage. However it be, there appears in it nothing of Prophetic; and there is little likelihood that the Spirit of God would ſet out, with ſo great ſtrength, the Arguments of *Sadduces*, or perhaps of worſe Men, to anſwer them but in two or three words. Read the beginning of the ninth Chapter, and make Reflection on theſe words: *The living know that they ſhall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a Reward; for the Memory of them is forgotten. Alſo their Love and their Hatred*

Hatred, and their Envy is now periſh'd; neither have they any more a Portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun. Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart; for God now accepteth thy Works.

Grotius is of Opinion that this Book was not writ by *Solomon* himſelf, but that it is a Work compos'd under his Name, by one that had been in *Caldea*; becauſe there are divers *Caldean* words in it. If this Conjecture be true, as is not impoſſible, then this Book will be nothing but a Piece of Wit and Fancy, compos'd by ſome of thoſe that had been in the Captivity. And I know one who has ſtudied much the Criticks of the holy Scripture, that ſuſpects the Author of this Book to have been of the Opinion that the *Sadduces* were of afterwards, about the Immortality of the Soul and the World to come. It ſeems to him that this Author ſays nothing which a true *Sadduce* might not ſay. But for my part, I think it beſt to determine nothing herein.

It is commonly believ'd that the Song of *Solomon* is a Myſterious Book, deſcribing the mutual Love between Chriſt and his Church. But there is

no proof of it neither in the Old nor New Teſtament, nor in the Book it ſelf. All that can be ſaid is, that the Jews explain this Book allegorically of God, of *Moſes*, and of the Jewiſh Church. But a Man need but read their Allegories, to ſee that they are the Viſions of *Rabbins*, having no Foundation but in the fanciful Extravagance of their Brains; which frame of Mind our Divines have ſo much inherited from them, that they give themſelves wholly up to find Myſteries in every thing. Nay it muſt be confeſs'd that ſome of them have in that out-done the *Rabbins*; and that there is nothing ſo Chimerical in the Chaldee Paraphraſt, as in the Commentaries of thoſe who pretend this Book ought to be explained by *Revelations*; and that in it are to be found all the Wars about Religion of this paſt Age, in *Germany*, the *Interim*, the League of *Smalcald*, the Peace of *Paſſau*, &c.

There being then no Proof of the Myſteries that are pretended to be in this Book; if we judg by the Book it ſelf, we ſhall find it to be an Idyle, or Eglogue, where *Solomon* brings himſelf in as a Shepherd, and one of his Wives (perhaps *Pharaoh*'s Daughter, as the Learned think)

think) as a Shepherdeſs; That the Stile is the ſame with that of the Paſtoral Poems of the Greeks and Latins, ſaving that it is more rough and dithyrambic, acccording to the Genius of the Hebrew Poetry. You may compare the Similitudes *Solomon* makes uſe of in the fourth Chapter with thoſe *Ovid* uſes in the Paſtoral Song he makes *Polyphemus* ſing, in the XIIIth Book of his *Metamorphoſis*.

The Book of *Job* is alſo a piece that has nothing in it of Prophetic. The Critics, who have any thing of a nice Judgment, agree that it is a ſort of Tragi-Comedy. It is likely there was ſuch an one as *Job* (ſince the Prophet *Ezekiel* ſpeaks of him) and that he met with great Afflictions, which afforded Subject to ſome Jew of the Captivity to exerciſe his Wit upon. There are in this Book, as well as in *Eccleſiaſtes*, many Chaldean words, which ſhow that it was compos'd either in *Chaldea*, or after the return from the Captivity. Divines agree that God inſpir'd not *Job*'s Friends with what the Author makes them ſay; and this Book being written in Verſe, ſeems to be a Work of Meditation, wherein the Author would make his Parts appear. Neither

Job, nor his Friends could talk in that manner, *extempore*. The design of the work is to shew, that Providence oft-times afflicts good People, not to punish them for any particular Sin, as if they had deserv'd those Afflictions more than others, but simply to try them, and give them occasion to exercise their Vertue. This is without doubt a Truth, but there is no need of being a Prophet to know it. And on the other side there is one very remarkable Fault in this Book. The Author brings in *Job* complaining Chap. III. with Bitterness, and extream Impatience, unworthy, not only of a pious Man, who had the knowledg of the true God, but even of a Pagan that had any Wisdom. *Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night wherein it was said, a Man-Child is born*, &c. This manner of cursing the day of his Birth with so much Passion becomes not a pious Man, such as *Job*, to what extremity soever he might be reduc'd. It is to be guilty of great *Indecorum*, to put into a good Man's Mouth so passionate words; as well as those that are in Chap. X. *I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Becomes it thee to oppress?*

oppreſs? &c. After ſuch Expreſſions as theſe, which are very like Blaſphemies, God finds, ſays the Author, *that his Servant* Job *has ſpoke the thing that is right before him*, and is angry with his Friends for believing that *Job* was afflicted for his Sins.

It appears, methinks, hereby clearly enough, that there was no Inſpiration in this Book, no more than in the three foregoing. Not but that theſe Books are uſeful, and may be read with Profit and Edification, as well as Antiquity read thoſe which we at preſent call *Apochrypha*. Nay it may be allow'd that they which compos'd them had the Spirit of God; that is to ſay, were full of Piety; and that they writ them with a proſpect of leading thoſe that ſhould read them into the ways of Piety.

But it may be objected, that theſe Books being in the Jews Canon ought to be acknowledg'd for divinely inſpir'd, rather than the *Apocryphas* that never were in it. I anſwer to that; Firſt, That no clear Reaſon is brought to convince us, that thoſe who made the Canon, or Catalogue of their Books, were infallible, or had any Inſpiration, whereby to diſtinguiſh inſpir'd Books from thoſe

which were not. This Collection is commonly attributed to *Esdras* and the great *Sanhedrim* of his Time, amongſt whom they ſay were *Zacchary*, *Haggai* and *Malachy*. But many learned Men believe not this Story, becauſe no proof is brought for it, except a very uncertain Jewiſh Tradition. There is much more likelihood that this Collection which we have is the remainder of the ancient Books of the Jews, which divers particular Men at firſt gathered together, and of which afterwards public uſe was made in the Synagogues; whereas in the time of *Nehemiah* (as appears by the Book that bears his Name) they read publickly only the Book of the Law.

In the ſecond place, if you will ſtand to the Jews Canon, it is plainly on my ſide. They divide the Scripture into three parts; of which the firſt contains the Books of the Law; the ſecond the Books they call the Prophets; and the third contain others which they call *Chetoubim*, or ſimply *Writings*; that is to ſay, the *Pſalms*, the *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Daniel*, *Eſdras*, *Nehemiah*, the *Chronicles*, and thoſe which they call the five little Books, the Song of *Solomon*, *Ruth*, the *Lamentations*,

lations, *Eccleſiaſtes*, and *Eſther*. They believ'd that theſe Books (which they call'd *Chetoubim*) were not inſpir'd as the other; and therefore they made them a ſeparate part of Scripture, diſtinct from the two former which they believed to be inſpir'd. This Diviſion is very ancient, having been in uſe in the time of our Lord, *Luke* XXIV. 44. and *Joſephus* owns it in his firſt Book againſt *Appion*; which makes me believe that this Opinion of the Jews is grounded upon the Judgment, that thoſe who collected the Books of their Canon made of them. It is certain *Daniel* is truly a Prophet, as well as *Iſaiah*; but it is likely they have rank'd his Book among the *Chetoubim*, only becauſe it was brought out of *Caldea* after the Collection was made; and perhaps becauſe, being written in *Chaldean*, it was in part tranſlated into Hebrew by ſome others, as ſome of the Learned have conjectur'd. For the other Writings which make up this Diviſion of the Scripture, being but Hiſtories, or Books of Morality, or Songs, they had reaſon to determine that there was nothing of Prophetic in them; at leaſt not of the ſame kind of Prophecy with that of *Iſaiah*, and others who are properly call'd Prophets. It is true

indeed there are ſome Predictions in the Book of *Pſalms*, but they are not of that ſort of Predictions that proceed from Inſpiration or Revelation, as were thoſe of *Iſaiah*. *David* never ſays, *Thus ſaith the Lord*; nor is it ſaid in his Hiſtory that in his time he paſſed for a Prophet. It only happen'd that in ſpeaking of his own Perſon, he ſpoke things that agreed not ſo much to himſelf as to the *Meſſiah*, of whom he was (unknown to himſelf) the Type. But I have already handl'd this ſort of Prophecy.

It may be ſaid perhaps, that Chriſt has acknowledg'd for divinely inſpir'd all the Books of the Old Teſtament, and that for that reaſon alone, all Chriſtians ought to be of that belief. But there is not any Paſſage in the Goſpel, where Chriſt tells us that all the Books of the Old Teſtament were inſpir'd by God, both as to the Words and Things. He approves them only in groſs, without deſcending to particulars, and examining every Book by it ſelf. It was ſufficient that there were divers Prophecies in the Old Teſtament, the Authority whereof was receiv'd among the Jews, that pointed at him. Our Saviour never undertook to make a Critical

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Treatiſe upon the ſacred Books, nor to clear the Hiſtorical Differences in them. His deſign was not to make us able Critics, but good Men; and to bring us to render to God the Obedience due to him. He omitted nothing that might inſtruct us in our Duty, but he never troubled himſelf to correct certain Errors of ſmall importance, which might be among the Jews.

And if we muſt take all the words of Chriſt, when he ſpeaks of the Scripture, in a ſtrict ſenſe; as if he acknowledg'd the Books he cites to be all inſpir'd even to the leaſt ſyllable, and the others on the contrary to be excluded out of the number of the ſacred Books; we muſt reject many of thoſe that are commonly reputed inſpir'd. Neither he nor his Apoſtles ever cite the Works of *Solomon*, or the Book of *Job*; except that St. *James* praiſes the Patience of *Job*, which, to ſpeak properly, is not to cite the Book but the Hiſtory. And if we muſt conclude from thence that all theſe Books have been wrongfully put into the Jews Canon, the common Opinion would be found contrary to the Authority of Chriſt and of his Apoſtles.

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Theſe Books then that we have ſpoken of are not neceſſarily to be accounted Divine for being in the Canon, or Catalogue of the Books of the Jews; which Jeſus Chriſt never call'd in queſtion: And there is no reaſon to interpret the word Canonical as if it ſignified inſpir'd of God. The Jews put in their Collection all the Fragments they had remaining of their ancient Books; they left out none, becauſe they had no others. It was all their Library, the reſt having been loſt in the Captivity, or before, or after; for the Story ſets not down the time of that fatal loſs. They pretended not at firſt that this Collection conſiſted of no other but what was divinely inſpir'd. But in proceſs of time, as there were therein many Writings that were truly Prophetic, and as theſe were the only Books that had eſcap'd the general Loſs which had involv'd the reſt, they began to be look'd on with more reſpect than they had been at firſt; and at length it came to be believ'd that all theſe Books, that were in the ancient Catalogue, were truly divine. And whereas before that time, Men apply'd themſelves to the Obſervation of what was moſt conſiderable

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in the Law, without making many Commentaries; from thence forwards they grew nice about the words; would take every thing in a ſtrict ſenſe; and by ſeeking for Myſteries where there were none, they abandon'd the moſt eſſential part of the Jewiſh Religion. They made the knowledg of Religion to conſiſt in the ſtudy of a thouſand vain Subtilties, and Piety to conſiſt in the ſcrupulous Obſervations of Ceremonial Laws, according as the Doctors interpreted them. This the *Phariſees* did in our Lord's Time, and it is alſo that which the Divines among the Chriſtians, both Ancient and Modern, have imitated ſince the Death of the Apoſtles. In their time Men apply'd themſelves to learn their Doctrine, without ſubtilizing about their Expreſſions; and this they did upon the aſſurance they had that thoſe holy Men taught faithfully what they had learn'd from Chriſt. Since then, it has been the practice to diſpute about their Words, and to ſtrain to the utmoſt divers of their Expreſſions, which were not over exact; from whence many Factions have been begot amongſt Chriſtians, who have fall'n foul one upon another about

bout the meaning of ſome ſuch particular Expreſſions of the Apoſtles, and have neglected at the ſame time to obey the Precepts of Jeſus Chriſt; that is to ſay, they have abandon'd the inward Subſtance of Religion, to buſy themſelves about the Outſide. Men have thought it an Honour to be ſtil'd that which they call zealous Orthodox, to be firmly link'd to a certain Party, to load others with Calumnies, and to damn by an abſolute Authority the reſt of Mankind; but have taken no care to demonſtrate the ſincerity and fervor of their Piety, by an exact Obſervation of the Goſpel Morals; which has come to paſs by reaſon that Orthodoxy agrees very well with our Paſſions, whereas the ſevere Morals of the Goſpel are incompatible with our way of living.

Thus much by the by, to let you ſee that this great Zeal which Men have for the Letter of the Scripture, is but a Cloak they make uſe of, to hide the little eſteem they have for the Religion it ſelf of Jeſus Chriſt; which conſiſts not in Criticiſms, or Controverſies, but in keeping God's Commandments.

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But it will be ask'd then, What Authority we allow the Holy Scripture, and what uſe is to be made of it according to theſe Principles? To anſwer hereto, I begin with the New Teſtament, which is the principal Foundation of our Faith. In the firſt place then, Jeſus Chriſt in whom were hidden all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledg, and whom God has expreſly commanded us *To hear*, was abſolutely infallible. We muſt believe without queſtioning it whatever he ſays; becauſe he ſays it, and becauſe God hath teſtified that he ſpeaks nothing but Truth.

In the ſecond place, ſince we have nothing writ by Chriſt himſelf, we ought to believe what his Apoſtles have ſaid concerning his Life and Doctrine; becauſe God has given Teſtimony to them by the Miracles he inabl'd them to do; and becauſe they ſeal'd the Truth of their Depoſition with their Blood. They tell us what they had ſeen and heard, ſo that it was impoſſible they ſhould be deceiv'd in the ſubſtance of the Hiſtory and Doctrine. It may be that in ſome Circumſtance of ſmall importance they do not relate things exactly

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as they happen'd, and that therein they do not agree together. But they all agree in the Hiſtorical Facts whereon the Faith we have in Jeſus Chriſt, is grounded; his Birth of a Virgin, his Miracles, his Death, his Reſurrection, and his Aſcenſion into Heaven; though there may be ſome difference among them in ſome Circumſtance, which is nothing to the ſubſtance of the Hiſtory. It is not neceſſary for the Foundation of our Faith, as I have already obſerv'd, that they ſhould agree exactly in all things to the leaſt tittle; and the trouble the Learned have given themſelves to reconcile theſe ſort of Contradictions is of no uſe. It were better to own ingenuouſly that there are ſome, than to ſtrain the ſenſe of their Writings, to make them agree one with another; which inſtead of converting Libertins, does but excite their Railery and confirms them in their Impiety. As to what concerns the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, there is not the leaſt Contradiction among the Evangeliſts; although it be expreſs'd in different Terms, and they relate it on divers occaſions. We muſt obſerve

ſerve therefore that they relate only the Senſe, and keep not exactly the ſame order that Chriſt kept in preaching it; ſo neither ought we to inſiſt rigorouſly upon their Expreſſions, as if they made uſe of ſome words rather than others, to inſinuate certain Niceties which are ordinarily attributed to them, without any probable ground; nor ought we to lay ſuch ſtreſs upon the order they make uſe of in their Writings, as to colour thereby certain Inferences, which are not otherwiſe obvious in the Senſe of our Saviour's words. If a Man obſerve never ſo little, he will find that they uſe every where popular Expreſſions; that they have not aim'd at any Elegancy in their Stile; and that they have been very far from ſpeaking with ſuch Exactneſs, as Philoſophers or Geometricians uſe in their Writings. We ought not then to inſiſt too much, as commonly Men do, upon the manner of their expreſſing the Doctrine of Chriſt. We ſhould only indeavour to underſtand the Genius of the Language they uſe, and to ſtick to the ſubſtance of things eſſential; which are expreſs'd in ſo many places, and after ſo many ways, that it is not difficult to frame

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to our ſelves an Idea thereof, clear enough to inſtruct us perfectly in our Duty.

In the third place, as for the Epiſtles of the New Teſtament, they do not only afford us the ſame Conſiderations with thoſe we have laſt mention'd, in reſpect of their Stile, but there are alſo two things further to be obſerv'd and diſtinguiſh'd in them. We find there the ſame Doctrines we have in the Evangeliſts, and thoſe the Apoſtles aſſure us often they learn'd from Chriſt. But there are others things, which the Apoſtles ſpeak of their own heads, or which they draw by divers Conſequences from the Old Teſtament. The firſt of theſe are to be believ'd on the ſame account as the Goſpels; that is to ſay, becauſe of the Authority of Jeſus Chriſt, who preach'd them to the Jews. The ſecond are to be receiv'd, becauſe they contain nothing but what is very conformable to the Doctrine of Chriſt, or what is founded upon right Reaſon. The Apoſtles will not have us believe them upon their own word. They diſtinguiſh in that their Authority from the Authority of Chriſt. See 1 *Cor.* VII. 10, 12, 25. But as they apply'd themſelves

ſelves carefully to mind Doctrines tending to Edification (which are few in number) and never ingag'd in too nice inquiries; they have told us nothing that is not conformable to the Spirit of the Goſpel (with which they were fill'd) and which right Reaſon will not eaſily admit. It is to be obſerv'd, that having no extraordinary Inſpiration for writing their Epiſtles, they inſert in them divers things that concern their Deſigns, or their particular Affairs; where we ought by no means to ſeek for or expect any thing myſterious. Such are the Salutations found at the end of their Epiſtles; the Order St. *Paul* gives *Timothy* to take *Mark* along with him in his return, to bring the Cloak he had left at *Troas* with *Carpus*, the Books, and above all the Parchments; the Counſel he gives him to drink a little Wine for his Stomachs ſake, and becauſe of his Weakneſſes; and other ſuch like things. See St. *Jerom*'s Preface to his Commentary upon the Epiſtle to *Philemon*.

In the fourth place, there are divers Prophecies ſcatter'd in theſe Epiſtles; and the *Apocalipſe* is wholly Prophetic. Now we ought to give Credit to theſe *Re-*

velations; becauſe it is God that imparted them immediately to the Apoſtles. And it is eaſy to diſtinguiſh them from other things, which the Apoſtles give out only as their own Conjectures; of which you have ſome Examples in the words of *Grotius*, which I cited concerning the Inſpiration of the Pen-Men of the New Teſtament.

Thus then, according to my *Hypotheſis*, the Authority of the Scripture continues in full force. For you ſee I maintain that we are oblig'd to believe the ſubſtance of the Hiſtory of the New Teſtament; and generally all the Doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt; all that was inſpir'd to the Apoſtles; and alſo whatſoever they have ſaid of themſelves, ſo far as it is conformable to our Saviour's Doctrine, and to right Reaſon. It is plain that nothing farther is neceſſarily to be believ'd, in order to our Salvation. And it ſeems alſo evident to me, that thoſe new Opinions, brought into the Chriſtian Religion ſince the Death of the Apoſtles, which I have here refuted, being altogether imaginary and ungrounded, inſtead of bringing any advantage to the Chriſtian Religion, are really very prejudicial

to

to it. An Inſpiration is attributed to the Apoſtles to which they never pretended, and whereof there is not the leaſt mark left in their Writings. Hereupon it happens that very many Perſons who have ſtrength enough of Underſtanding to deny Aſſent to a thing for which there is no good proof brought (though preach'd with never ſo much Gravity); It happens, I ſay, that theſe Perſons reject all the Chriſtian Religion; becauſe they do not diſtinguiſh true Chriſtianity from thoſe Dreams of fanciful Divines.

It is eaſy to gueſs, after this, what we ought to think of the Authority of the Books of the Old Teſtament. The Prophecies that are in it ought to be believ'd, becauſe Chriſt has authoriz'd them. The ſubſtance of the Hiſtory ought alſo to be believed for the ſame reaſon; notwithſtanding any uncertainty there may be in ſome inconſiderable Circumſtances; as it appears there is ſtill ſome uncertainty, by divers Contradictions which the Divines with all their Subtilty have not been able to reconcile, after puzling about it above three thouſand Years. The Doctrines that are in it ought alſo to be receiv'd, ſo

far as they are conformable to those of the Gospel; or, if you will, let us say that the true meaning of the Law is to be learn'd from Christ. No Conclusion is to be drawn from those Books that appear to be only pieces of Wit and Fancy, or wherein nothing but Human is to be found, such as the Song of *Solomon*, *Ecclesiastes*, &c. Lastly, we ought not to strain too far the Sense of particular Expressions, as do the Jews; Because, if we except a very few places, the Expressions are the same with those which the sacred Writers were wont to make use of in explaining their other Thoughts; that is to say, they have worded both the Jewish History, and the Revelations they had from Heaven, after their own ordinary manner of expressing themselves.

These, Sir, are the Thoughts of Mr. *N.* concerning the Inspiration of the sacred Pen-Men. I am told he draws from these Principles three Consequences. The first is, That by admitting this *Hypothesis* we may terminate many great Disputes among Christians, which have risen from the false Subtilty of Divines interpreting too mysteriously the Expressions of the holy Scripture,

as

as if every ſyllable had been dictated by God. The ſecond is, that whereas by ſticking too cloſe to the Letter of the Scripture, the Eſſence of Religion comes to be neglected; as if God required no more of us at preſent but to believe that the holy Scripture is divinely inſpir'd; inſtead, I ſay, of this Practice, it will be found neceſſary to apply our ſelves wholly to the obeying Chriſt's Precepts, which is the only thing God indiſpenſably requires from us. The third Conſequence is, that hereby at one blow will be ſolv'd an infinite number of Difficulties, which Libertines are wont to alledg againſt the holy Scripture, and which it is not poſſible to ſolve by the ordinary Principles. Their Mouths will be ſtopp'd, ſays Mr. *N.* and it will no longer avail them to object againſt Chriſtians the Contradictions which are found in the Scriptures; the lowneſs of the Stile of the ſacred Writers; the little Order obſerv'd to be in many of their Diſcourſes; and whatſoever elſe they have been us'd to ſay againſt our Divines, who have in vain puzled themſelves to anſwer them. By impoſing nothing upon theſe Men as neceſſary to be believ'd, but the Truth

of what is most essential in the Histories of the Old and New Testament, and the Divinity of our Saviour's Doctrine, (in which there is nothing that is not conformable to right Reason) they will be brought (says he) to acknowledg that Christian Religion is really descended from Heaven; and will be easily inclin'd to embrace that which hitherto they have obstinately rejected, because it was grounded on Suppositions repugnant to that Light of Reason by which they are guided.

I shall not undertake, Sir, to examine these Consequences, nor the Principles from whence they are drawn. I promis'd you only a bare account of the Thoughts of Mr. *N.* And I hope you will use means that some Divine, vers'd in these matters, may satisfy us both upon this Subject, better than I my self am able to do. I am, *&c.*

THE

THE THIRD LETTER.

YOU have ſeen, Sir, to how little purpoſe it is that Mr. *Simon* indeavours to defend his particular Opinions, as well as thoſe which are common to him with all other Roman-Catholic Doctors. You ſhall ſee now that he is no happier in going about to play the Critic on two Letters, in which he was not concern'd. It appears evidently that nothing but the itch he hath of carping at other Mens Writings has made him undertake to examine thoſe Letters. For he embraces the greateſt part of the Opinions which the Author there maintains. And I doubt not but thoſe who have judg'd the Opinions of Mr. *N.* too bold, will be as much ſcandaliz'd at thoſe of the pious *Prior of Bolleville.*

That incomparable Critic maintains at firſt daſh, as boldly as if he were

assur'd of it by Revelation, that he that is call'd Mr. *N.* is *Noel Aubert de Versé*; which I have told you already is nothing but a Dream of Mr. *Simon*'s; who thinks he may lawfully say any thing that comes in his Head, and believes that by boldly affirming it he shall make his Reader be of his Mind. That is a Secret of his Rhetoric, which he puts in practice as soon as ever he finds himself puzl'd, or when he imagines he may thereby worst his Antagonist. But by ill fortune he has us'd it so long, that his Art being plainly discover'd, can no more deceive any body. By saying whatever came in his Mind, although in truth he did not believe it, he has so grosly contradicted himself, that he has now lost all Credit with Men of Worth. I need therefore return no other answer to the beginning of our Author's XIIth Chap. than by saying, that I am sorry his Choler does so much blind him, as to make him affirm a Falshood as boldly as the cleareſt Truth. I pray God, as I have often done, to cure him of a Passion that discomposes him in so deplorable a manner; and which may in time render him incapable of serving the Public, as he might do, if he considered

a little more on what he thinks fit to publiſh.

I will not ſpend my Labour ſingly upon his Remarks; for I write not this to ſatisfy him. In the ill Humour he is, nothing is ſo fit to ſettle his Mind as Time. I will therefore but touch on them as I go along, when the nature of what I have to ſay leads me to it.

Neither is it my deſign to defend the Opinions of Mr. *N.* concerning the Inſpiration of the ſacred Writers. Tho I ſaid it was hard to anſwer his Proofs fully, I ſaid not that I was convinc'd. On the contrary, I propos'd them to the Learned, that I might provoke them to examine the matter carefully, and might draw from their Obſervations ſome further Light than my own Meditations could furniſh me with.

But as Mens Intentions are not interpreted always ſo favourably as they ought to be, I find my ſelf oblig'd (that I may ſatisfy the Scruples of ſome pious Perſons, and repel the Calumnies of ſome Divines who have more Zeal than Knowledg) to anſwer four ſorts of Reflections that are made upon the Treatiſe concerning Inſpiration.

I. Some

I. Some Learned Men, who approve the Opinions of Mr. *N.* conceive nevertheleſs that they ought not to have been publiſh'd; becauſe in their Judgments it is not fit that all Truths ſhould indifferently be communicated to all People. There are, ſay they, certain things, which though good in themſelves, may eaſily be apply'd to ill uſes; and it is better that the Public ſhould be depriv'd of the advantage it might draw from the knowledg of ſuch Truths, than be viſibly expos'd to the danger of abuſing them ſo lamentably as it would be apt to do.

II. Others, who are of the ſame Mind, in approving the Opinions of Mr. *N.* believe that ſince he was willing thoſe his Thoughts ſhould be publiſh'd, he ought to have expreſs'd them more diſtinctly; and above all to have propos'd in the firſt place, the State of the Queſtion between him and the generality of Divines. Theſe Gentlemen think that if he had done as they ſay, he had prevented a great many Calumnies which are grounded upon nothing but the Obſcurity that is obſerv'd to be in ſome places of his Writing.

III. Some

III. Some of those who look upon the Opinion of Mr. *N.* as false Doctrine, cannot indure that I should have said, *It appears not by what Principle it can be overthrown.* They say that nothing is more easy. And to let you see they are in the right, they make divers Answers to the Arguments of Mr. *N.* and propose some Objections, which they believe sufficient to refute all he has said.

IV. Lastly, the most hot, and the least reasonable of these Objectors affirm, that the Opinions of our Friend lead directly to Deism; and stick not to accuse him of favouring that abominable Opinion.

You see, Sir, to what Heads I am oblig'd to make Answer, being of Opinion (as I am) that it was convenient to publish that Writing concerning Inspiration. To begin with the first: I acknowledg, Sir, that what they say is true. I grant that all sorts of Truths are not fit to be spoken at all times, and on all occasions. It is undoubtedly a very ill thing to publish any Truth not necessary to be known, how certain soever it may be, when we are assur'd, that

that thoſe who ſhall read or underſtand it will infallibly be ſo ſcandaliz'd at it, that the knowledg thereof will produce more hurt than good. On ſuch occaſions, Chriſtian Prudence indiſpenſably obliges us to the contrary. The Queſtion is not then, Whether the Maxim of theſe Gentlemen be true or not. In that we are agreed. But my Opinion was, that this Writing of Mr. *N.* would do infinitely more good than hurt; and I dare yet maintain, that in the Times wherin we live, it is very fit that ſuch Matters as theſe be throughly examin'd, without concealing from the Public any of the Difficulties that attend them.

You know, Sir, that moſt of the Sciences being arriv'd in this our Age to a greater degree of Perfection than formerly; though from thence it might be expected, that ſuch Improvements ſhould have render'd Chriſtians ſo much the more wiſe and more judicious; yet on the contrary, Libertiniſm and Impiety have prevail'd more ſcandalouſly than ever. The Libertines of former Ages profeſs'd their Opinions only in ſome extravagant Sallies of Wit, or Debauchery; and oppos'd the Chriſtian Religion

ligion only by ſome inſipid Railleries, which could have no weight with any Perſons of ſound Judgment and unbiaſs'd Affections. But the Libertines of our Times make uſe of their Philoſophy and Criticiſm, to overthrow the moſt ſacred and moſt ſolid Doctrines of our Religion. Divers impious Books have been publiſh'd not only in *Latin*, but alſo in *French*, in *Engliſh*, and in *Dutch*; which many unlearned Perſons read with much greedineſs. Abundance of People are fond of *Spinoza*'s Opinions; becauſe they have read his Books in *French*, in *Engliſh*, and in *Dutch*, though they never ſtudy'd Philoſophy nor Criticiſm. We are in Times wherein every body pretends to depth of Learning, freedom of Thought, and ſtrength of Judgment; and this Reputation is eaſily acquir'd by reading thoſe Books. But that which renders this yet more deplorable, is that it is not a Diſeaſe of Youth, that Men grow out of as they advance in Years. They whoſe Minds are once tainted with theſe unhappy Opinions do very ſeldom get quit of them.

This is undoubtedly a great Miſchief, and to which thoſe who are any ways

ways able to bring Remedy are oblig'd to do it. It has been endeavoured to overthrow the Authority of the holy Scriptures, by making appear that the Stile of the sacred Writers was not inspir'd, and that they did not receive every thing they said from immediate Inspiration. And in effect it has happen'd that many People have hereupon believ'd, that the Authority of the Scripture was intirely ruin'd; And imagining that the Reasons brought by *Spinoza* to prove this Opinion were unanswerable, they have fall'n into Deism or into Atheism.

What Remedy, Sir, for this? For my part, I confess, I see but one of these three. Either a way must be found to burn all the Copies of these impious Books, that have corrupted so many Men, and to blot out of Mens Memory the Arguments of these Libertines; or else there must solid Demonstration be made of the Falsity of the Arguments they make use of to maintain their Opinions; Or, lastly, in granting to them that the sacred Pen-Men were not inspir'd, neither as to the Stile, nor as to those things which they might know otherwise than by Revelation, it must be yet demonstrated that the Authority of the

the Scriptures ought not for all that to be eſteemed leſs conſiderable.

It is plain that the firſt of theſe three is abſolutely impoſſible; and that, tho an Inquiſition ſhould now be ſettl'd in *France*, in *England*, and in *Holland*, it would already be too late. There is then no other means left to cure this Libertiniſm that is ſpread ſo wide, but one of the two laſt propos'd Remedies. For my part I could wiſh with all my Heart that ſome body would try the ſecond; and would make it evident that God has inſpir'd the ſacred Authors, not only with the matter they have ſpoken about, but alſo with the very Expreſſions. But ſince no body has yet done, nor that I know undertaken to do it, why ſhould it be ill taken that Mr. *N.* has made uſe of the third method, or that I have publiſh'd his Writing?

It is true, there are ſome who believe that it were better to hold ones peace in a matter ſo delicate, than to run the hazard of giving ſcandal to others, by contradicting the Opinions which they think moſt reaſonable. This indeed would be very well, if Libertines alſo forbore writing, or if no body read their Books;

Books. But since it is otherwise, such silence is not at all seasonable. If any weak Minds take Offence without Reason at what is offer'd, there are an hundred others that may be brought off from their Inclination to Libertinism, by the same Reasons which those are offended at. If indeed we ought always to be afraid of saying any thing that is not generally approv'd, we should quickly be oblig'd not only to keep silence, but also to suppress many things which are both useful and necessary to Salvation. There is no Doctrine in the Gospel, how holy soever, which some Sect of Christians has not perverted and misused. Nay the same is yet done daily.

All the difficulty then lies in knowing, whether the treating concerning this Question of the Inspiration of the Authors of the Bible will occasion more Good or Hurt? In it self the Thing is good, even by the Concession of those that argue against it; and there is nothing but the weakness of some Mens Minds that can render it dangerous. Thus then the Good or Evil of this Disquisition depends wholly upon the Event; which therefore these Gentlemen ought to suffer us to expect, before

we acknowledg that we have done ill in publiſhing this Writing of Mr. *N.*

We muſt add to this, that Mr. *N.* is not the firſt that has ſpoken, as he does, of the Inſpiration of the ſacred Writers. We ſee many Proofs of it in his Diſſertation. And beſides the places which he has cited out of ſome Books of *Grotius*, there are others infinitely more ſtrong and more expreſs in thoſe againſt *Rivet.*

Now after having thus anſwer'd thoſe that would have had this Writing ſuppreſs'd; it is neceſſary to give ſome ſatisfaction to thoſe alſo who complain that the Author has not expreſs'd his Opinion with ſufficient clearneſs. I have therefore deſir'd Mr. *N.* to explain it to me himſelf, if it were poſſible in few words, and more diſtinctly; in order to remove thoſe injurious Suſpicions that may have riſen from any Obſcurity in his Writing, concerning his Faith and his Piety. And theſe are the Heads to which he has reduc'd his Opinion, and wherein he agrees with us.

In the firſt place, ſays he, "I believe that no Prophet, either of the "Old or New Teſtament, has ſaid any

"thing in the Name of God, or as "by his order, which God had not "effectually order'd him to say; nor "has undertaken to foretel any thing, "which God had not indeed truly re-"veal'd to him; and that this cannot "be doubted of without great Impiety. "I have said it expresly in many places "of my Treatise.

In the second place, "I believe, that "there is no matter of Fact, of any im-"portance, related in the History of "the Old or New Testament, which "in effect is not true. And that tho "there may be some slight Circumstan-"ces, wherein some of the Historians "were mistaken; yet we ought never-"theless to look upon that History in "general as the truest and most holy "History that ever was publish'd a-"mongst Men. I am perswaded that "those who writ it were very well "inform'd of all they relate, and that "they had not the least intention to "deceive us; insomuch that it was im-"possible they should fall into any con-"siderable Error; as neither can we "do, in believing what they have said. "And, that there may be no Equivo-"cation; By a matter of importance

"I

"I mean all the Commandments that "the ſacred Hiſtorians aſſure us were "given to the Jews by God; all the "Miracles that are found in the Hiſto-"ry of the Scripture; all the principal "Events in that Hiſtory; and generally "all the matters of Fact on which our "Faith is grounded.

"In the third place, I believe, with "all Chriſtians, that all the Do-"ctrines propos'd by the Authors of "the Scriptures to Jews and Chriſtians "to be believ'd, are really and truly "Divine Doctrines, although it may "be ſuppos'd that they did not imme-"diately learn them from Heaven; I "am as much perſwaded as any Man, "that there is no ſort of reaſoning "made uſe of in the dogmatical places "of the holy Scripture (where the "Prophets and Apoſtles inſtruct us "concerning the Promiſes or the Will "of God) that can lead us into Error, "or into the belief of any thing that "is falſe, or contrary to Piety.

"I believe in the fourth place, That "Jeſus Chriſt was abſolutely infallible, "as well as free from all Sin, becauſe "of the Godhead that was always u-"nited to him, and which perpetually

" inſpir'd him: inſomuch that all that
" he taught is as certain as if God
" himſelf had pronounc'd it. I have
" explain'd this clearly in my Writing.

" In the laſt place, I believe that God
" has often dictated to the Prophets
" and to the Apoſtles the very words
" which they ſhould uſe. Of this I
" have alſo given ſome Examples.

" In theſe things I agree with all
" Chriſtian Divines. And I believe fur-
" ther, as well as they, that theſe five
" Heads of our Belief may be undenia-
" bly prov'd againſt Libertines and
" Atheiſts, by the Authority of Jeſus
" Chriſt and his Apoſtles; to whom
" God has born Teſtimony by an infi-
" nite number of Miracles, which are
" more clearly demonſtrable to have
" been really done, than any Fact what-
" ſoever of all ancient Hiſtory. For
" Example, it may be prov'd by poſi-
" tive Teſtimonies of Matters of Fact,
" that Jeſus Chriſt did really riſe again
" from the Dead, and that the Apo-
" ſtles had the Gift of Miracles, more
" clearly than it can be prov'd that
" ever there was a Roman Emperor
" call'd *Trajan*.

" If

"If any one conceive that this kind
"of Evidence is not ſufficient to con-
"vince us of the Truth of theſe Facts,
"or that the Reſurrection of Jeſus
"Chriſt, and the Miracles of his Apo-
"ſtles, do not ſufficiently prove (with-
"out any thing further) that they were
"not Deceivers; I confeſs I underſtand
"not what further Proofs can be given
"of theſe things; unleſs God ſhould
"raiſe in our days a Prophet that ſhould
"do the ſame Miracles over again be-
"fore our Eyes. It may be there are
"ſome who believe that the holy Spi-
"rit gives them inward aſſurance of
"the Truth of the Goſpel, and who
"imagine that this inward Teſtimony
"is a more convincing Proof than all
"thoſe I have ſpoken of. But as there
"are not many that have this Belief,
"and as thoſe that have it cannot
"make uſe of that pretended inward
"Teſtimony to convince another, who
"does not himſelf feel it; we may,
"without troubling our ſelves further
"with them, leave them to enjoy that
"Chimerical Satisfaction which their
"meer Imagination affords them.

"The Authority of the holy Scrip-
"tures being thus ſettl'd, I will now

" ſhew you wherein it ſeems to me that
" the generality of Divines are de-
" ceiv'd, and in what I am not of their
" Opinion.

" They affirm that all that is in
" the ſacred Books, Hiſtories, Prophe-
" cies, &c. has been immediately in-
" ſpir'd both as to the Matter and
" Words: That all the Books in the
" Jews Catalogue ought to be reckon'd
" amongſt the inſpir'd Books: That
" when the Apoſtles preach'd the Gof-
" pel, they were ſo inſpir'd that they
" could not be deceiv'd, not even in a
" thing of no conſequence at all; and
" that they knew at the very firſt,
" without any exerciſe either of Rea-
" ſon or Memory, what they were to
" ſay.

" On the contrary my Opinion is,
" That it is only in Prophecies, and
" ſome other places, as in the Sermons
" of Jeſus Chriſt, and where God
" himſelf is introduc'd ſpeaking, that
" the Matter or Things have been
" immediately reveal'd to thoſe who
" ſpoke them: That the Stile, for the
" moſt part, was left to the liberty of
" thoſe who ſpoke or writ: That there
" are ſome Books that are not inſpir'd,

" neither

" neither as to the Matter nor Words,
" as *Job*, *Eccleſiaſtes*, &c. That there
" are ſome Paſſages, which Paſſion di-
" ctated to thoſe that writ them, as
" many Curſes in the *Pſalms*: That
" the ſacred Hiſtorians might commit,
" and have actually committed ſome
" light Faults, which are of no moment:
" That the Apoſtles in preaching the
" Goſpel, or in writing their Works,
" were not ordinarily inſpir'd, neither
" as to the Matter, nor the Words; but
" that they had recourſe to their Me-
" mory and Judgment, in declaring
" what Jeſus Chriſt had taught them,
" or framing Arguments, or drawing
" Conſequences from thence: That
" the Apoſtles while they liv'd were
" only look'd upon as faithful Witneſſes
" of what they had ſeen and heard,
" and as Perſons well inſtructed in the
" Chriſtian Religion, whereof no part
" was unknown to them, or conceal'd
" by them from their Diſciples; but not
" as Men that preach'd and taught by
" perpetual Inſpiration. I believe in-
" deed that they were not deceiv'd in
" any Point of Doctrine, and that it
" was very unlikely they ſhould be ſo;
" becauſe Chriſtian Religion is eaſy,

" and compris'd in a few Articles: That
" they pretended not to enter into deep
" Argumentations, and to draw Conse-
" qrences remote from their Principles:
" and that they never undertook to treat
" of nice and controversial Matters, as is
" plain by reading of their Writings: Or,
" if it happen'd sometimes that they
" were mistaken in any thing, as it
" seems to have happen'd to St. *Peter* and
" to St. *Barnabas*, it has been in things
" of small consequence, and they soon
" perceiv'd their Error, as did these
" two Apostles. This sort of Infalli-
" bility is easy to be conceiv'd; if it
" be consider'd that a Man of Sense and
" Integrity, who is well instructed in
" his Religion, and who does not much
" enter into Argumentations and draw-
" ing of Inferences, can hardly err, so
" long as he continues in that Temper,
" and observes that Conduct.

" This is the Sum of what I have
" said in my Writing concerning the
" Inspiration of the sacred Pen-Men;
" and it is herein precisely that I dif-
" fer from the common Opinion of
" Divines. You see how much these
" Principles are contrary to those of
" the Deists, who reject all sort of In-

" spira-

" ſpiration, and who look upon the
" holy Scripture as a Work full of Fal-
" ſities, and wherein there is nothing
" but what is purely human. The Di-
" vines that have accus'd me of Deiſm
" on account of this Writing, certain-
" ly either never took the pains to
" read it, or did not underſtand it;
" for I cannot believe that they would
" accuſe me of ſo deteſtable an Opinion
" out of pure Malice, and againſt their
" own Conſciences. They were un-
" doubtedly in ſome meaſure miſ-led by
" a falſe Zeal, that render'd them little
" attentive to what they read, or made
" them ſuſpect that the Author had not
" diſcover'd all that he had in his Mind.
" It is an ill Cuſtom that ſome peeviſh
" and ill-natur'd Perſons have, to judg
" of other Mens Opinions rather by
" the Suſpicions which their own de-
" prav'd Imaginations ſuggeſt to them,
" than by thoſe Mens Expreſſions and
" Actions; which are the only Evi-
" dence that ought to be regarded on
" theſe occaſions. A Man ought to be
" judged by what he ſays, and not by
" what he ſays not, nor by what is
" injuriouſly imputed to him without
" any Proof. And if this ought al-

" ways

" ways to be the Rule of our Carriage
" one towards another, there is more
" particular Reaſon that it ſhould be ſo
" when a Man proteſts (as I do at pre-
" ſent) that he is not of any other
" Opinion than what he expreſly ſets
" down; and that he diſowns the ill
" Conſequences which are pretended
" to be drawn from his Diſcourſes, and
" which to him ſeem not to be deduci-
" ble from them.

By this Explanation of Mr. *N*'s Principles, which I receiv'd from himſelf, you may ſee, Sir, that he is very far from thoſe impious Opinions which ſome too hot-headed Divines have charg'd him with. Candid and equitable Readers had no need of this Explanation, in which I ſee nothing but what is plainly enough ſet down in his firſt Writing. But as Equity is a Vertue ſeldom practis'd in Theological Controverſies, he thought it neceſſary to give theſe further Explications, to thoſe who perſiſted ſtill in ſuſpecting him to believe things which he abhors. We ſhall ſee hereafter if any ill Conſequence can be drawn from his Opinion.

But

But before I come to that, I will tranſcribe here what he further adds to that which you have already ſeen. "In reading, ſays he, the Prior of "*Bolleville*'s Anſwer to the Thoughts "of ſome *Holland* Divines, I obſerv'd "that Mr. *Simon* accuſes me of having "taken part of what I have ſaid out "*Grotius* his Book, call'd *Votum pro Pace* "*Eccleſiaſticâ*. I ſhould be well pleas'd "that my Reader believ'd it. I could "not then be accus'd, as I am by ſome, "of Innovation. It is true, I have "read that Book; but it being long ago, "that Paſſage of *Grotius* was not in my "Mind; otherwiſe I ſhould not have "fail'd to have cited it, as I have cited "others of the ſame Author that are "leſs expreſs. I think it therefore not "amiſs to take advantage of this Ad- "vertiſement, and now to ſet down "that Paſſage, together with another "taken out of his Defence of the *Vow* "*for Peace*, titl'd, *Diſcuſſio Apologetici* "*Rivetiani*.

"*Grotius* had ſaid in a Work where- "in he defends his Obſervations upon "the Conſultation of *Caſſander* againſt "*Rivet*, that this laſt Divine was very "much deceiv'd *in believing that all the* "*Books*

Animadv. in Animadv. Rivet. *p.* 647.

" *Books of the Old Teſtament, that are in*
" *the Hebrew Canon, were dictated by the*
" *Holy Ghoſt*; *that* Eſdras *in the Opinion*
" *of all the Jews was not a Prophet, nor*
" *had the holy Spirit*; *that his Books, and*
" *the Collection he made of the more an-*
" *cient Books, had been approv'd by the*
" *great Synagogue, in which indeed there*
" *were ſome Prophets*; *although the Jews*
" *hold that there was a doubt concerning*
" *the Book of* Eccleſiaſtes, *&c. Rivet*
" liked not this Opinion of *Grotius*, and
" indeavoured to prove the contrary,
" by Scripture, and by ſome Jewiſh Au-
" thors. *Grotius* replied to him in theſe
" terms, in his *Vow for Peace.*
" * *I ſaid indeed that the Books*
" *in the Hebrew Canon were not*
" *all dictated by the holy Spirit*;
" *But I do not deny that they*
" *were written with a pious inten-*
" *tion of Mind. And this was*
" *the Determination of the great*
" *Synagogue, whoſe Judgment in*
" *this matter the Jews ſubmit to.*
" *For there was no need that the*
" *Hiſtories ſhould be dictated by*
" *the holy Spirit. It was ſufficient*
" *that the Writer had a good*
" *Memory, for the things he had*
" *ſeen*

Pdg. 672.

* Verè dixi non omnes libros qui ſunt in Hebræo Canone dictatos à Spiritu Sancto; Scriptos eſſe cum pio animi motu non nego; & hoc eſt quod judicavit Synagoga magna, cujus judicio in hac re ſtant Hebræi. Sed à Spiritu Sancto dictari hiſtorias nihil fuit opus: ſatis fuit ſcriptorem memoriâ valere circa res ſpectatas, aut diligentiâ in deſcribendis veterum Commentariis. Vox quoq; Spiritus Sancti am-

" *seen*; *or that he were careful in*
" *transcribing the ancient Records.*
" *The word* Holy Spirit *is also*
" *ambiguous*; *for either it signi-*
" *fies, as I have taken it, a certain*
" *divine Inspiration which both*
" *the ordinary Prophets had, and*
" *sometimes* David *and* Daniel;
" *or it signifies a pious Motion*
" *or Faculty stirring a Man up to*
" *utter useful Precepts relating to*
" *Human Life, or Political or*
" *Civil Matters. Thus* Maimo-
" nides *interprets the word* Holy
" Spirit, *where he treats of those*
" *Historical and Moral Writings.*
" *If* Luke *had written by the*
" *dictating of the Holy Spirit, he*
" *would have fetch'd his Autho-*
" *rity from thence, as the Pro-*
" *phets do, rather than from Witnesses,*
" *whose Credit he follows*, &c.

ambigua est; nam aut significat, quomodo ego accepi, afflatum divinum qualem habuere tum Prophetæ ordinarii, tum interdum David & Daniel; aut significat pium motum, sive facultatem impellentem ad loquendum salutaria vivendi præcepta, vel res politicas & civiles, quomodo vocem Spiritus Sancti, interpretatur Maimonides, ubi de Scriptis illis aut Historicis aut Moralib. agit. Si Lucas divino afflatu dictante sua scripsisset, inde potius sibi sumpsisset autoritatem, ut Prophetæ faciunt, quam à testibus quorum fidem est secutus, &c.

" * *Rivet* was mightily scandalized, or
" at least seem'd to be so, at an answer
" so contradictory to the common O-
" pinions. But ‖ *Grotius* explain'd himself
" yet more clearly and strongly in his Re-
" futation of *Rivet*'s Apology.
" † *Grotius*, says he, *himself*,
" *willingly acknowledges, that the*
" *Pro-*

* Apologet. §. 118, & 119.

‖ p. 722.

† Afflatu Dei locutos quæ locuti sunt, scripsisse quæ scribere jussi sunt

sunt Prophetæ toto animo agnoscit. Grotius: idem judicat de Apocalypsi & Apostolorum prædictionibus. Christi dicta omnia quin sint Dei dicta dubitari nefas. De Scriptis Historicis & Moralibus Hebræorum sententiis aliud putat. Satis est quod pio animo scripta sint, & optimâ fide, & de rebus summis, &c. Neq; Esdras, Neq; Lucas Prophetæ fuere, sed viri graves, prudentes, qui nec fallere vellent, nec falli se sinerent. Dixitne Lucas, *Factum est ad Lucam verbum Domini, & dixit ei Dominus scribe*, ut solent Prophetæ? Nihil tale. Quid ergo? *Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem, quæ nobis completæ sunt, rerum.* Dicit se non præcepto sed aliorum exemplo adductum ut scriberet. *Sicut tradiderunt nobis qui ab initio ipsi viderunt, & ministri fuere Sermonis*, nempe Maria Mater Domini, cognati ejus alii, Apostoli, Discipuli Septuaginta, Sancti &

"*Prophets, who were commanded*
"*by God to write or speak, did*
"*write and spoke by Inspiration*
"*from him: His Opinion is also*
"*the same as to the Apocalyse,*
"*and the Predictions made by the*
"*Apostles: He esteems it the*
"*highest Impiety to make any*
"*doubt that all that was said by*
"*Jesus Christ was said by God*
"*himself. Concerning the His-*
"*storical Writings, and the Mo-*
"*ral Sentences of the Hebrews,*
"*he is of another Opinion: He*
"*thinks it sufficient to believe*
"*that they were written out of a*
"*pious Intention, and with great*
"*Ingenuity, and concerning mat-*
"*ters of highest importance, &c.*
"*Neither* Esdras *nor* Luke *were*
"*Prophets; but grave and pru-*
"*dent Men, who neither were*
"*minded to deceive, nor would*
"*suffer themselves to be deceived.*
"*Did Luke say,* The Word of
"the Lord came to *Luke*, and
"the Lord said to him, write,
"*as the Prophets us'd to say?*
"*Nothing like it. What then?*
"For as much as many have
"taken

"taken in hand to set forth in order a "Declaration of those things which "are most surely believed among us: "(*He says not that by Command, but by "the Example of others, he was induced "to write*): Even as they delivered them "to us, who from the beginning were "Eye-witnesses, and Ministers of the "Word; (viz. *Mary the Mother of our "Lord, other of his Kinsmen, the Apo-"stles, the seventy Disciples, and the Saints "that had been rais'd again by Jesus, ma-"ny Witnesses of his Resurrection:*) It "seemed good to me also, having had "perfect understanding of all things "from the very first, &c. *Understanding, "how acquir'd? From Eye-witnesses, not "by Revelation. To write, not things di-"ctated, but in order. The Prophets then "had another sort of Impulse than Luke; "whose good Design nevertheless may be "ascrib'd to the Holy Spirit.*

& resuscitati à Jesu, testes Resurrectionis complures. *Visum est mihi assecuto omnia à principio, &c.* Quomodo assecuto? ex ipsis testibus non ex Revelatione. Scribere non dictata sed diligenter ex ordine. Longè ergo aliter acti Prophetæ, aliter Lucas: cujus tamen pium consilium Spiritui Sancto potest adscribi.

"After the Death of *Grotius* there "came out a third Answer of *Rivet's*, "wherein he strives to defend the com-"mon Opinion against his famous An-"tagonist. It appears plainly by the "manner of his answering, that he be-"liev'd that the Holy Spirit had dicta-"ted the Scripture word for word;

Grotianæ discuss. διλυσις, Sect. 14. §. 3, 4.

"and

" and this Opinion is known to be the
" common Opinion of Proteſtants;
" who on all occaſions call the ſacred
" Writers, *Amanuenſes of the holy Spirit.*
" Nay even Catholick Authors, *Gregory*
" *de Valence*, *Bellarmin*, *Tolet*, and *Eſtius*,
" cited by *Rivet*, ſeem to have been of
" the ſame Opinion. *Cornelius à Lapide*,
" whom Mr. *Simon* cites, holds the ſame
" concerning the Law and the Prophets;
" though he confeſſes it was not ne-
" ceſſary that God ſhould dictate the
" words, when it was only matter of
" Hiſtory, or of Moral Precepts, which
" might be known otherways. So that
" it may be reaſonably ſuppos'd that
" the greateſt part of Chriſtian Divines
" now adays are of the Opinion of
" verbal Inſpiration, if we may ſo call
" it; ſince there are very few that ſay
" the contrary; and thoſe who do, ſay
" it only of ſome Books, as *Cornelius à*
" *Lapide.*

" Every body knows that not only
" in Sermons, but alſo in Divinity-
" Lectures, upon any part of Scrip-
" ture, ſome Men ſtrangely wire-draw
" the Words of the Scripture; and
" ſeek after Reaſons why the holy Spi-
" rit, as they ſpeak, makes uſe of one

" Ex-

" Expreſſion rather than another. The
" ſame thing they do alſo in Commenta-
" ries: Which would be altogether ab-
" ſurd if my Suppoſition were admitted,
" that the Stile of the Scriptures is for
" the moſt part human and even careleſs
" enough. But this is becauſe they
" commonly take the Opinion of the
" Jews for granted; who have a Pro-
" verb or general Maxim concerning the
" Books of the Law (in which they be-
" lieve all to be Inſpir'd, even to a ſin-
" gle Letter) that *there is not a Letter*
" *in the Law, whereon there depends not*
" *great Mountains.*

" I am very glad, however, that
" Mr. *Simon* declares himſelf openly of
" the ſame Opinion with me, concerning
" the Stile of the ſacred Writers. I
" wiſh all Proteſtants would do the
" ſame. We ſhould then ſoon be free
" from many Diſputes that are ground-
" ed upon nothing but Grammatical
" Subtilties. We ſhould then perceive,
" that we ought not rigorouſly to in-
" ſiſt upon a great many Expreſſions in
" the utmoſt extent of their Significa-
" tion, as if the ſacred Pen-Men had
" ſpoken with the ſame Exactneſs, as
" do Geometricians. We ſhould then

" underſtand that no Doctrines, which
" we eſteem important, ought to be
" grounded barely upon certain manners
" of ſpeaking; which we cannot be ſure
" were exact; becauſe the ſacred Wri-
" ters, not affecting exactneſs of Stile,
" may have uſed that manner of Expreſ-
" ſion without any deſign. Such is the
" Doctrine of the antecedent Imputation
" of the Sin of *Adam*, which is found-
" ed upon the Compariſon St. *Paul*
" makes (Chap. V. of the Epiſtle to the
" *Romans*) between the Grace that came
" by Jeſus Chriſt, and the Sin that en-
" tred into the World by *Adam*. Men
" ſtretch this Compariſon with too
" much Rigor, not conſidering that
" St. *Paul*'s Stile is the Stile of one
" that obſerves little Exactneſs in his
" Expreſſions, although in the main his
" Arguments are admirable; and that
" the laying too great ſtreſs upon the
" turn of his Phraſes may expoſe us to
" the hazard of falling into groſs Error.
" The general Deſign that he propoſes
" to himſelf ought only to be ſtuck to;
" without inſiſting particularly upon
" every term, and every diſtinct Pe-
" riod; which taken ſeparately and
" ſtrictly, may oft-times prove contrary

" to

"to what he drives at. Thoſe who "are a little converſant in the Diſputes "amongſt Proteſtants, will eaſily ſee "the importance of this Remark.

"The ingenuous Acknowledgment "of what there is of Human in the "ſacred Writings, would render the "Truth of our Religion more conſpi-"cuous to the Eyes of the incredu-"lous; whereas it is hid from them, by "clothing it in certain Notions which "common Senſe makes them reject, "and from among which they are not "able to pick out the Heavenly Truths. "Men fancy that for the Eſtabliſhment "of Religion it is requiſite to maintain "every thing, or any thing, that (if "true) would be an invincible Proof "of it. They caſt therefore about in "their own Minds for ſuch Foundations "as they conceive would make it moſt "ſtable. With this their Brain be-"comes ſo heated, that in the end "they raſhly aſſert that theſe are the "real Foundations of Religion; and "that if theſe be taken away, Religion "will fall to the ground and be de-"ſtroy'd. Thus ſome Romiſh Doctors "have fancy'd that Men, for the moſt "part, not being capable to examine

" Religion themſelves, it was neceſſary
" that God ſhould ſettle a way where-
" by they might find it, without Ex-
" amination; *viz.* by the way of Au-
" thority. And from thence they have
" concluded, That to deny there is an
" Authority in the World to which
" People ought intirely to ſubmit, is
" to overthrow Religion. But to theſe
" Gentlemen it is anſwer'd, That it is
" abſurd in them to fancy that God
" will not preſerve the true Religion
" amongſt Men, unleſs it be in the way
" that they have imagin'd. The ſame
" may be anſwer'd to our Proteſtant
" Divines, who believe the Inſpiration
" of every word; *viz.* that they are de-
" ceived in believing that the Truth of
" Chriſtian Religion is founded upon
" that Opinion. We ought not to
" reckon every thing among the Prin-
" ciples of our Religion, that unto us
" ſeems proper to ſtrengthen it; nor to
" trouble our ſelves in examining af-
" ter what manner we would have eſta-
" bliſh'd it, had the thing depended up-
" on us; or in aſſerting how God ought
" to have done it. But we ought to
" conſider things in themſelves as they
" really are, and learn what has been

" the

"the Will of God, by what he has "done; not conclude that he has "done this or the other thing, becauſe "we fancy he ought to have will'd "it. Libertines who ſee that to "uphold the Truth of Chriſtian Re-"ligion, Men bring long Metaphyſi-"cal Arguments (which often prove "nothing, but that, according to the "Suppoſitions they have thought fit "to make, it ought to be ſo) be-"lieve preſently that Chriſtian Re-"ligion has no better Foundation, "and ſo reject it; as much perhaps "through the fault of thoſe Divines "who argue in that manner, as their "own. But if things were repre-"ſented to them as they are in them-"ſelves, without going about to force "them to allow that which is not "prov'd, they would ſubmit to our "Reaſons; and we ſhould not need to "teach them any thing but what Re-"ligion injoins them, after having con-"vinc'd them of its Truth.

This is, Sir, what Mr. *N.* has writ to me, upon the deſire that was intimated of his giving ſome further

Explication of his Thoughts. I hope it will be found ſufficient to convince thoſe who may have miſtaken his Senſe, and who on that account have charg'd him with Opinions which he never had, that he is very far from being guilty of what he is ſo uncharitably accus'd of. I will ſend you, by the next, the Anſwers which he makes to divers Objections that have been propos'd to him.

THE

THE FOURTH LETTER.

I Believe, Sir, there is no Condition in the World more deplorable, than theirs that publiſh any thing in Print; if it be ſo that they are bound to ſatisfy all thoſe that cenſure them. Some Perſons have taken it ill that it ſhould be ſaid, It was hard to confute the Opinions of Mr. *N.* They hold it very eaſy, and that there needs no great Ability to do it. But they either undertake it not; Or if they make any Objection, they ſhow that they underſtand nothing of the matter; as the Prior of *Bolleville*, who ſeems to underſtand neither what Mr. *N.* has ſaid, nor what himſelf objects. Others confeſs that it is a very difficult matter; and pretend that therefore a Man ought not to trouble himſelf with it; nor raiſe Scruples in weak Heads which

the ſtrongeſt would find it a difficulty to remove. To ſatisfy the firſt, it would be requiſite to ſhow, that the Objections propos'd are not ſtrong enough to refute Mr. *N*'s Opinions: And that is the very thing that will infallibly offend the others, who would have nothing ſaid on that Subject. If the Advice of theſe laſt be taken, the firſt will undoubtedly ſay that we were much in the wrong, to ſay that it was very hard to confute an Opinion, which they have eaſily overthrown. They will be apt even to ſay that it is not without deſign that we have made uſe of weak Arguments, and their crazy Fancies will ſet no bounds to their Suſpicions; according to the Cuſtom of too many Divines, who glory in a ſhew of diving into other Mens Thoughts. What is to be done in this caſe? One of the two muſt unavoidably be diſpleas'd.

I will not then be afraid, Sir, to communicate to you the Anſwers of Mr. *N*. to ſome Objections. Such as have not read the Explanations which I ſent you a while ago, with ſufficient Attention, may perhaps by our Friend's Anſwers better apprehend his true meaning.

Objecti-

Objection 1.

To ſay that the Prophets have often expreſs'd themſelves in their Prophecies, after the ſame manner that they were wont to do on other occaſions, and that they were not conſtantly inſpir'd by God with all their Expreſſions, is to leſſen the Authority of the Prophecies. Page 15.

Anſwer.

"They that make this Objection "could not ſay any thing that can give "more advantage to the Profane. For "it is as clear as day, that the Stile of "the Prophets varies according to the "diverſity of their Genius; as has been "obſerv'd, and as is agreed by the "moſt able Interpreters. Mr. *Simon* "proves it himſelf, *Pag.* 123. of his "Anſwer, and makes appear that what "the Prophets ſaid was not the leſs "God's Word. But I cannot forbear "to obſerve that our Divines are even "more ſcrupulous than the Jews. For "theſe believe the Inſpiration of Words "only in the *Pentateuch*; whereas they "believe it throughout all the Old Te-"ſtament. * *The Prophecy of Moſes*, "ſays *Manaſſeth Ben. Iſrael*, after many "other

* Prophetia Moſis per omnia

nia tanto dignior præstantiorq; fuit cæterorum omnium Prophetarum Prophetiâ; quod his quo tempore Prophetiam accipiebant, tantummodo sensus, sive res Prophetiâ comprehensa revelabatur: istam autem rem seu sensum propriis suis verbis populo enarrabant. Atq; eâ de causâ usurpabant hanc loquendi formulam: Et loquutus Dominus mihi: quasi dicerent, ea quæ dicimus, licet verbis nostris exprimamus, sensum tamen habent quem à Deo ipso accepimus.

"other Rabbins, *was in every respect more honourable, and more excellent, than the Prophecies of all the other Prophets. For to them, whensoever they receiv'd the Prophecy, the Sense only, or the Substance of the matter to be foretold was reveal'd; but they declar'd to the People this Thing or Matter in their own words. And for that Reason they made use of this form of speaking; And the Lord said unto me; As if they would say, these things which we say to you, although we express them in our words, contain the Sense which we have receiv'd from God*, &c. Many Christian Divines have said the same things of all the Prophets in general; as Mr. *Huet in his Demonstration*; who plainly affirms, *that the things are to be attributed to the holy Spirit, but the Words and the Language to the Prophets.* He says also elsewhere, *that Prophetic Extasy does ordinarily produce a † hard, rough and broken Stile.* Many others have held the same thing, without being thought guilty of Heterodoxy.

† Scabrum salebrorum ac dissipatum.

Objecti-

Objection 2.

It has been ſaid, that *David* ſays many things of himſelf, and of his Enemies, not thinking to propheſy; which contain notwithſtanding Predictions of what was to happen to Jeſus Chriſt and his Enemies; as what he ſays *Pſal.* XLI. 10. LXIX. 26. CIX. 8. places which Chriſt and his Apoſtles apply to *Judas*. Nevertheleſs St. *Peter*, after citing ſome words of *Pſal.* XVI. where *David* ſpeaks of himſelf in the firſt Perſon, *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, nor ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee Corruption*, &c. adds, that this cannot be underſtood of *David*, ſince he was dead and rotten many Years ago; but that *as he was a Prophet, and knew that God had ſworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit upon his Throne; he ſeeing this before-hand, ſpake of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, when he ſaid, that his Soul*, &c. by which it appears that *David*, ſpeaking in the firſt Perſon, knew nevertheleſs that he ſpoke not concerning himſelf. Page 23.

Anſwer.

"I did not ſay, that *David* never "propheſy'd, in ſpeaking of himſelf as

"of

" of a Type of the *Messiah*; or that " he understood not that in the pro- " pereſt and higheſt ſenſe of his Words " he ſpake concerning the *Messiah*, " though what he ſaid had alſo ſome " relation to himſelf. I make no que- " ſtion but there are in the *Pſalms* di- " vers Prophecies of this nature. It is " plain, *David* could not ſay of him- " ſelf, unleſs in a very Metaphorical " Senſe, that *God would not leave his* " *Soul in Hell, nor ſuffer his Holy One to* " *ſee Corruption*, although the reſt of " the *Pſalm* may be ſuitable enough to " him.

Objection 3.

The Curſes in the CIXth *Pſalm* are imputed to a human Paſſion; yet St. *Peter* teaches us, *Acts* I. 20. that it is a Prophecy. It ſeems the better way therefore to take all thoſe Curſes for ſimple Predictions, and not for Imprecations, and ſo to tranſlate in the Future Tenſe; *Thou ſhalt ſet a wicked Man over him, and his Adverſary ſhall*, &c.

Anſwer.

" This might be a Prophecy, of that " ſort which we ſaid were ſometimes " pronounc'd without their being aware " who

"who pronounc'd it; of which we "brought ſome Examples: which ſort "of Prophecy is not inconſiſtent with a "violent Paſſion; as appears by the Ex-"ample of *Caiaphas*. But indeed theſe "Expreſſions cannot be tranſlated in the "future Tenſe, without extream vio-"lence to the Text; and accordingly "the ancient Interpreters, as well as "modern, have made uſe of the Im-"perative or Optative Mood: Nor "ought it to ſeem ſtrange that we think "there was in this an Exceſs of Paſſion, "ſince it is impoſſible to explain any "other way thoſe words of *Pſalm* "CXXXVII. *Happy ſhall he be that taketh* "*and daſheth thy little ones againſt the* "*Stones*, &c. Let any one compare "the words of *Pſal.* CIX. with thoſe "which a Heathen Poet puts into the "Mouth of a deſperate Woman.

"*Vivat, per urbes erret ignotas egens,*
"*Exul, pavens, inviſus, incerti laris,*
"——— *quoque non aliud queam*
"*Pejus precari, liberos ſimiles Patri,*
"*Simileſq; Matri.*

"In fine, if it were neceſſary to render "all theſe words in the future Tenſe,

"to

" to avoid making the Pſalmiſt pro-
" nounce ſuch Curſes, there are a great
" many other places where the Verſion
" would need to be reform'd, and where
" we ſhould be oblig'd to ſtrain the
" Text; as may eaſily be perceiv'd in
" turning over the Book of *Pſalms*.

Objection 4.

Page 26. It has been ſaid, that Inſpiration ſeems not abſolutely neceſſary to the compoſing of pious Hymns; and concluded from thence that it ought not to be ſaid that all ſuch Hymns were immediately inſpir'd. The ſame ſort of Argument has been applied alſo afterwards to divers other places of Scripture. But it no ways follows, becauſe Inſpiration was not abſolutely neceſſary, that therefore there was none.

Anſwer.

" My Argument proves not directly
" that there was no Inſpiration on theſe
" occaſions, but only that there was
" nothing in the thing it ſelf to induce
" us to believe that there was any; and
" conſequently, that ſuch Inſpiration
" is ſuppos'd without any neceſſity.
" When a thing may be done by the
" ordi-

"ordinary courſe of Nature, we ought
"not to have recourſe to Miracles.
"Hence I conclude, that there ought
"to be no recourſe to Inſpiration,
"when there is nothing in a Book to
"make us believe it was inſpir'd; and
"when all that is in it might have been
"ſaid without Inſpiration; unleſs we
"have ſome poſitive Proof that he who
"compos'd it was inſpir'd. Now I
"maintain that there is no Proof of
"this nature, ſufficient to perſwade us
"that all the Books of the Scripture
"were Inſpir'd in the ſame manner
"that they are commonly ſaid to have
"been.

Objection 5.

It has been inferr'd from the evident marks of Meditation, and Pains taking, which appear in ſeveral places of the Scripture (as thoſe where the Verſes begin with all the Letters of the Alphabet in order) that thoſe places have not been inſpir'd. But it does not appear that Inſpiration excludes all ſort of Meditation and Pains-taking, as Mr. *Simon* has obſerv'd, *&c. Reſp.* p. 125, &c. Page 27.

Anſwer.

Answer.

" I acknowledg that it cannot from " thence be concluded that the matter " was not inſpir'd; nor was this Argu- " ment made uſe of, but only againſt " thoſe who hold the Inſpiration of the " very words; that is to ſay, principally, " againſt the generality of Proteſtant " Divines. There is certainly little like- " lihood that the Spirit of God would " inſpire ſuch things as thoſe. But the " Conſequence I have drawn from thence " is only this, that the Stile not being " inſpir'd, we cannot be ſure that the " things are; unleſs the Characters of " Inſpiration appear in thoſe things " themſelves, or that we have other- " wiſe ſome poſitive Proof of it.

Objection 6.

Pag. 28, &c. What has been ſaid concerning the Inſpiration of the ſacred Hiſtorians is not enough: There ought to have been added alſo, as Mr. *Simon* has it, *That God directed the Pen of the ſacred Hiſtorians in ſuch a manner, that they could not fall into Error. They were Men that wrote; and the Spirit that directed them depriv'd them not of their Reaſon, nor their Memory, to inſpire them with matters*

matters of Fact, which they themſelves knew perfectly: but it determin'd them in general to write of ſome matters, rather than others, though they knew both alike well. Reſp. p. 128.

Anſwer.

"This may be granted; provided "that by *directing the Pen of the ſacred* "*Hiſtorians* be only underſtood *the de-* "*termining them in general to write of* "*ſome matters rather than others, though* "*they knew both alike well.* Mr. *Simon* "fights here with his own Shadow: "for no body deny'd that. On the "contrary, it was ſaid that the ſacred "Hiſtorians have writ of no matter, "whereof they were not well inſtruct- "ed: And this in oppoſition to thoſe "who pretend that the Hiſtorians of "the Bible were inſpir'd with the mat- "ters, in the ſame manner as if they "could not have known them any o- "ther way. But theſe People would "condemn Mr. *Simon* as well as me.

Objection 7.

It is ſuppos'd, without any Reaſon, Page 35. that there are ſometimes real Contradictions amongſt the ſacred Hiſtorians,

whereas they are but ſeeming ones. The Learned have reconcil'd them all, not excepting that about the Death of *Judas*, which is cited as an Example of a *manifeſt Contradiction*.

Anſwer.

"To anſwer this Objection fully, it "would be requiſite not only to quote "the places, where 'tis believ'd there "is ſome little Contradiction; but al-"ſo all the Explications which many "learned Men have given of thoſe "places, whereby to ſhow that there "is not any of thoſe Explications that "clears the Difficulty. But to do this "would require a Book for every place; "for there is ſo great variety of Opi-"nions upon theſe Paſſages, that there "may be reckon'd up ten or twelve "Interpretations of one ſingle place. "One Learned Man has made a Vo-"lume in *Quarto*, of an hundred and "ninety two Pages, upon that ſingle "place concerning the Death of *Judas*. "But if the moſt of theſe Interpre-"tations be conſider'd without pre-"poſſeſſion, they will be found to be "very much ſtrain'd. Words are ne-"ver wanting. And it is no eaſy "matter

J. Gronovius de pernicie & caſu Judæ.

" matter to silence a Man of an indiffe-
" rent Capacity, who undertakes to de-
" fend an Opinion that cannot be
" demonstratively disprov'd. Let me
" therefore, on this occasion, intreat
" the Reader to examine some of those
" places, that have given the Learned the
" most trouble; and then let him ask him-
" self whether he would admit of those
" Reconcilements that he finds in the
" Commentators, if the Question con-
" cern'd other Authors than those of the
" Bible. Assuredly he would reject them;
" and would say that it were better to
" confess that there is some Contrarie-
" ty in small things, than to render the
" whole History doubtful, by persist-
" ing obstinately in defence of things
" of no consequence. If this were
" done in what concerns the Death of
" *Judas*, which is brought for an Ex-
" ample, I am well assur'd there is no
" Opinion would appear more reasona-
" ble than that of *Salmasius*, in his
" third Letter to *Bartholin* concern-
" ing the Cross. * *It is manifest*, says
" he, *that it was usual with the Evan-
" gelists not to take much heed of minute
" Circumstances, when they were in the
" right, as to the principal History: Nor do*

* Constat Evangelistis hunc morem fuisse ut minutias τῶν πραγμάτων neglexerint, cum de principali Historiâ sibi rationem veritatis scirent constare. Nec video quomodo aliter id in quo dissident de morte Judæ, Matthæus & Lucas, componi queat. p. 618.

" *I ſee how otherwiſe that wherein* Mat-
" thew *and* Luke *differ, concerning the*
" *Death of* Judas, *can be reconcil'd.*

Objection 8.

Page 40. Whereas it is doubted, whether it were well done to admit the Hiſtory of *Eſther* in the Hebrew Canon, becauſe there are ſome Circumſtances in it which ſeem to be pure Invention; Ought not thoſe Circumſtances to have been cited? And ſuppoſing they were ſuch; may it not be ſaid, with Mr. *Simon* (*Pag.* 129. of his Anſwer) that the Book might be a Parable, and not the leſs Canonical for that?

Anſwer.

" I might ſave my ſelf the labour
" of anſwering this Objection, becauſe
" I have affirmed nothing in this mat-
" ter. On the contrary, I ſaid that I
" would not examine the Opinion of
" thoſe who believe the Hiſtory of
" *Eſther* to be a feigned Hiſtory. Nei-
" ther will I make my ſelf at preſent
" a Party in the Diſpute. But ſince it
" is deſir'd, I will barely recite the
" Reaſons for which ſome reject this
" Book.

" *In*

" *In the first place*; *Mordecai* and *Esther*, whom the Author represents as " pious Persons, and particularly favour'd by Heaven, agree to do a " thing forbidden by the Law. It is " where *Mordecai* counsels *Esther* to in- " deavour to please *Ahasuerus*, which " she consents to; though *Moses* had ex- " pressly forbidden them to make Alli- " ance with the Heathens.

" *In the second place*; All the Cir- " cumstances of this Story are very ob- " servable. *Esther* pleases the King, " who proclaims her Queen of the " *Medes* and *Persians*, but does not ob- " lige her to tell him from what Ex- " traction she is sprung. *Mordecai* dis- " covers a Conspiracy against *Ahasue- " rus*, and advertises him of it by the " means of the Queen, without recei- " ving nevertheless any Recompence; " only the Conspirators were hang'd, " and the whole matter recorded. " *Haman* grows in great favour at " Court, insomuch that all the World " bowed and reverenced him. *Morde- " cai* thinks not fit to do it. *Haman* " cannot bear his Neglect; and having " learn'd that he is a Jew, resolves to " make the whole Jewish Nation perish

" for his sake. He offers King *Abasue-*
" *rus* ten thousand Talents, if he will
" consent to that Nation's Destruction.
" The King presently consents (with-
" out taking the Money) and gives
" *Haman* his Ring; who makes use of
" it in sealing the Letters, wherein it
" is order'd to lay violent Hands on all
" the Jews, not sparing Women nor
" little Children. Messengers are di-
" spatch'd to carry these Letters all
" over the Kingdom, and the Edict is
" publish'd at *Shushan*. *Esther*, who had
" not yet told what Extraction she was
" of, is inform'd that *Mordecai* was at
" the King's Gate all in Sackcloath.
" She sends him Raiment; which he re-
" fuses, and expects a second Message
" before he tells what makes him so
" sad. *Esther* having learn'd the mat-
" ter, is afraid to appear before the
" King; because it was forbidden by
" the Laws of the Kingdom, unless the
" King by reaching out his Scepter of
" Gold dispensed with it; but being
" blam'd by *Mordecai*, she resolves to
" run the hazard, after a Fast of three
" days observ'd by her self, her Ladies
" of Honour, and all the Jews in *Shu-*
" *shan*. *Esther* appears before the King.

" He

"He ſees her, and reaches out his Scep-
"ter of Gold that ſhe might come
"near him. She invites the King and
"*Haman* to a Banquet in her Apart-
"ment. They go, and the King at the
"Banquet asks the Queen what ſhe
"would have him grant her. She invites
"*Ahaſuerus* and *Haman* again the next
"day. *Haman* puff'd up with his good
"Fortune, boaſts of his Happineſs to
"his Wife and all his Friends; but
"complains at the ſame time extream-
"ly of *Mordecai* the Jew for not doing
"him Reverence. His Wife adviſes him
"to cauſe a Gibbet to be made fifty Foot
"high, and to ſpeak unto the King on
"the Morrow that *Mordecai* might be
"hanged thereon. *Haman* goes to Bed
"thereupon, ſecure that the next day
"he ſhould be reveng'd of the Inſo-
"lence of the Jew. But the King, who
"could not ſleep that Night, cauſes
"the Records of State to be read to
"him, where he finds the good Office
"that Jew had done him; for which, on
"Inquiry, he was told that no Reward
"had been given him. *Haman* comes
"to Court early in the Morning, to
"ſpeak to the King that *Mordecai*
"might be hang'd. But he is no ſooner

" in the Preſence, than the King calls
" to him, and asks him what ſhould
" be done to the Man whom the King
" would extreamly honour. *Haman*,
" who fancy'd it was himſelf that the
" King was minded ſo to honour, an-
" ſwers in a way that tended to the
" advantage of the Perſon that was to
" be honoured. Immediately the King
" commands him (what a Thunder-
" bolt for an ambitious and revengeful
" Perſon!) to go do it to *Mordecai*
" the Jew. He retires home in Confu-
" ſion, to bewail his Misfortune with
" his Friends; who tell him plainly that
" the Jew will be too hard for him.
" Preſently the King's Chamberlains
" come to call him to the Banquet in
" the Queen's Apartment. At the
" Banquet *Eſther* tells the King there
" was a Deſign to deſtroy her and her
" People. The King in a Paſſion asks
" who it was deſign'd it; and being
" told it was *Haman*, he goes out in
" Wrath into the Garden. *Haman*, on
" the other ſide, ſtays with the Queen,
" and throws himſelf upon her Bed, in-
" deavouring to pacify her Wrath.
" The King returns while he was in
" that Poſture, and believes *Haman* was

" about

" about to force the Queen. *Haman* is
" ſeiz'd upon to be put to Death, and
" the Gibbet being found ready fitted
" for *Mordecai*, *Haman* by the King's
" order is hanged upon it. *Mordecai*
" ſucceeds in the place of *Haman*; and
" by *Eſther*'s means obtains another
" Edict, whereby the Jews are per-
" mitted to take Arms, and defend
" themſelves againſt thoſe that ſhould
" fall upon them. The day mention'd
" in the Edict being come, the Jews
" kill all thoſe that went about to de-
" ſtroy them. They ſlay five hundred
" in *Shuſhan*. And the like leave being
" given them the next day, they kill
" three hundred more, beſides *Haman*'s
" ten Sons who were hang'd by the
" King's order. Now upon the conſi-
" deration of all theſe Circumſtances,
" it is obſerv'd by ſome, that if *Unity*
" *of Time and Place* had been obſerv'd
" in this Story, there would have
" been nothing wanting to have made
" it a good Tragi-Comedy. For my
" part I determine nothing upon the
" Point.

" But this I can ſay, that in all like-
" lihood Mr. *Simon* had not read of a
" long time this Book, when he writ

" the

" the 129th *Page* of his Anſwer; where
" he ſays, *That though it ſhould be ſup-*
" *poſ'd that the Books of* Eſther, Judith,
" *and* Tobit *are not true Hiſtories, yet*
" *it does not follow therefore that they ought*
" *to be left out of the Catalogue of Cano-*
" *nical Books: And that he has obſerv'd*
" *in his Critical Hiſtory, after St.* Jerom,
" *that the Parabolical Stile has always been*
" *in eſteem amongſt the Eaſtern People, and*
" *that a Book whether it contain a true*
" *Hiſtory, or a plain Parable, or a Hi-*
" *ſtory mix'd with Parables, is not there-*
" *fore the leſs true or leſs Canonical.* If
" the Hiſtories contain'd in theſe Books
" are not true, they are certainly not
" Parables, but Romances. The bare
" reading them is ſufficient to ſhow that
" thoſe who writ them publiſh'd them
" not for Books of Morality, but only
" as ſurprizing and wonderful Stories.
" To ſay nothing of *Judith* and *Tobit*,
" it is plain by the Original which the
" Author of the Book of *Eſther* gives
" to the Feaſt of *Purim*, that he com-
" poſ'd that Book with deſign to make
" it look like a true Hiſtory. See the
" IXth Chap. *v.* 27. to the end. The
" Original of a Feaſt uſes not to be
" founded upon a Parable; and ſuch a

" Hiſto-

"History as that of *Esther* is not wont "to be mix'd with Parables. Mr. *Si-* "*mon* says well, that there are Para- "bles in the New Testament so well "circumstantiated, that one would take "them for true Histories. But we "must not have read either the Book "of *Esther*, or the New Testament, to "be perswaded that there is any re- "semblance betwixt the History of that "Book, and the Parables of our Savi- "our. The Parable most like to a Hi- "story is that of *Dives* and *Lazarus*, "but there is nothing in it like the "History of *Esther*. See *Joseph. Antiq.* "*lib.* 11. *cap.* 6.

Objection 9.

The Prudence and Reason of the Apostles is often spoken of, as if the use they made thereof were inconsistent with the Inspiration attributed to them; but these things may well agree together, as Mr. *Simon* observes. Page 46.

Answer.

"If Mr. *Simon* understood what he "would say, when he speaks of recon- "ciling Human Prudence with Inspi- "ration, he believes undoubtedly the

"same

" ſame thing that I do, concerning the
" Inſpiration of the Apoſtles. We a-
" gree that the Terms were not inſpir'd.
" The queſtion is only about the Things.
" The Inſpiration of the things con-
" ſiſts, either in preſenting to the Mind
" general Principles, from whence they
" that are inſpir'd, according as they
" have occaſion afterward, draw Con-
" ſequences; or in furniſhing it with
" Arguments ready fram'd. If God
" furniſh'd the Minds of the Apoſtles
" with Arguments ready fram'd, they
" made no uſe of their Reaſon, having
" nothing to do but to declare what the
" holy Spirit had inſpir'd them with; as
" the Prophets were only to expreſs the
" Senſe of what God had ſaid to them.
" And this is that which every body calls
" properly Inſpiration. But if it be
" ſuppos'd that God preſented to the
" Minds of the Apoſtles only general
" Principles, of which by their own
" reaſoning they made neceſſary and
" fit Application, upon emergent occa-
" ſions; they were in that caſe no more
" inſpir'd than thoſe, who having care-
" fully read the holy Scripture, have
" the Ideas thereof ſo preſent in their
" Minds, that they never fail to make

" uſe

"uſe of it when it is neceſſary. In "this laſt Suppoſition Reaſon indeed "is made uſe of, but in the other it "is not. Now it appears that Mr. *Si-* "*mon* is not of the Opinion that ex- "cludes the uſe of Reaſon. And there- "fore I ſay it is probable that he is of "the ſame Opinion with me, though he "know it not. For I deny not but "God might have preſented to the "Minds of the Apoſtles, either by ſu- "pernatural or natural ways, the ge- "neral Ideas of which they ſhould ſtand "in need, to defend themſelves at their "Trials. I only deny that God always "inſpir'd them with all the Arguments "they made uſe of on thoſe occaſions. "Mr. *Simon* adds, *That to ſay that* "*the Spirit of Courage and Holineſs,* "*which the Goſpel produces in our Hearts,* "*dictated to the Apoſtles what they ſhould* "*ſay, is to deſtroy intirely the inward* "*Grace which God did ſpread abroad in* "*the Hearts of his Apoſtles, and which he* "*yet daily ſpreads abroad in the Hearts* "*of the Faithful.* But what does he "mean by this inward Grace, which "is common to the Apoſtles and the "Faithful? Is it not the Spirit of the "Goſpel? At leaſt the Faithful have

"no-

" nothing elſe in common with the " Apoſtles. Now if the Apoſtles by " virtue of this Promiſe, *It is not you " that ſpeak, it is the Spirit of your Fa- " ther that ſpeaks in you*, have receiv'd " (as Mr. *Simon* gives us to underſtand) " only *the inward Grace which God ſpreads " abroad daily in the Hearts of the Faith- " ful*, the Inſpirations of the Apoſtles " were not different from thoſe of the " Faithful now a days.

Objection 10.

Page 45, 48. Whereas it is ſaid, That the Apoſtles ſpoke many things at their Trials which might have been ſpoken without Inſpiration, and from thence is inferr'd that it is not neceſſary to believe that they were inſpir'd with thoſe things; *This way of arguing may be apply'd to the Prophets, whom nevertheleſs we acknowledg to have been truly inſpir'd.* Mr. *Simon* Reſp. 131.

Anſwer.

" Mr. *Simon*, who ſees nothing in " Books but what his Paſſion ſhows him, " might have taken notice that I ſaid, " that the Prophets teach us they are " inſpir'd, when they ſay *Thus ſaith the " Lord*, &c. There are two ways to

" know

"know if a thing be inſpir'd. The "firſt conſiſts in obſerving if thoſe "who ſay this or that thing, maintain "that they had it from God by an "extraordinary Revelation, whereof "they give undeniable Proofs, as did "the Prophets. The ſecond is when "the thing it ſelf declar'd ſhows it to "be ſo. When the firſt way fails, we "muſt have recourſe to the ſecond; and "where they both fail, we have no "reaſon to believe there is any Inſpira-"tion. Now this is that which ap-"pears in many Diſcourſes of the Apo-"ſtles, where they do not ſay that God "has taught them by extraordinary Re-"velation that which they publiſh; And "where the matter it ſelf ſhows that "there was no need of his doing it.

"It does not therefore follow, that "thoſe who acknowledg the Inſpirati-"on of the Prophets are obliged to ac-"knowledg the like of all other ſacred "Writers; becauſe there are convin-"cing Reaſons which oblige us to be-"lieve that the Prophets ſpeak Truth, "when they ſay *Thus ſaith the Lord*, &c. "and no reaſon to believe that the A-"poſtles were extraordinarily inſpir'd, "when they ſay it not; and when their

"Diſ-

" Diſcourſes have in them no mark of " ſuch like Inſpiration.

" If we reflect upon this difference " between Prophecies, and Diſcourſes " which have nothing of Prophetic in " them, we ſhall take heed of applying " to this Subject a looſe Maxim, and " which is good for nothing; *viz.* " *That it happens moſt frequently that thoſe* " *who diſtinguiſh and divide Matters, with* " *deſign to make uſe of part and reject the* " *other, do give great advantage to their* " *Adverſaries.* On the contrary, it " ſcarce ever happens, that in handling " a compounded Subject there can be " made ſuch general Rules as may be " equally apply'd to all the parts of it. " Parts of different nature muſt of ne- " ceſſity be differently handled.

Objection 11.

Page 49. It has been ſaid, that by the holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, may be underſtood the Spirit of Holineſs and of Conſtancy, which the Goſpel inſpires; or ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind as is an Effect of our Faith. *But the general Reaſons there made uſe of, which are grounded only upon equivocal words, can prove nothing but Generals: They muſt be*

be apply'd, and particular Enquiry made, whether the holy Spirit has any other Signification in Scripture or no. Mr. *Simon* Reſp. *pag.* 131.

Anſwer.

"When a Paſſage is to be anſwer'd "wherein there is an equivocal word, "upon which an Objection is founded, "it is ſufficient to ſhow that ſuch "a word may be underſtood in ano- "ther Senſe, than that in which it has "been taken. There is no need of "examining all the other Significati- "ons that it may have. It ſuffices to "ſhow that the Signification then given "it is agreeable to the ordinary uſe of "the Language, and ſuitable to the "Subject there treated of. It was "Mr. *Simon*'s part therefore to ſhow "that where it is ſaid of St. *Stephen*, "(on occaſion of whom the Obſerva- "tion was made) *That they could not "reſiſt the Wiſdom and Spirit by which "he ſpoke*; I ſay it was his part to "ſhow that by the word *Spirit* any "thing ought to be underſtood but the "Spirit of the Goſpel; that is to ſay, "a Diſpoſition of Mind conformable "to the Precepts of Jeſus Chriſt. He

" ought to have ſhown that this word
" in this place ought neceſſarily to be
" underſtood in another Senſe. But
" Mr. *Simon* ſeldom gives himſelf the
" trouble to read the places of Scrip-
" ture that are cited; as appears in the
" ſame Page, where he ſays that St. *Paul*
" told the High Prieſt *with a juſt In-*
" *dignation, God ſhall ſmite thee thou*
" *whited Wall*; and where he compares
" the words of St. *Paul* to thoſe of Je-
" ſus Chriſt, when he calls *Herod Fox*;
" and to the Reproaches that the Pro-
" phets make to the Kings of *Iſrael*.
" But he ſhould have ſhown us in what
" place Jeſus Chriſt and the Prophets
" confeſs'd they were to blame in doing
" ſo, as St. *Paul* confeſſes he was. God has
" Power to cenſure Princes: But it be-
" longs not to Subjects to do it, when
" they think fit. So St. *Paul* had no
" right to abuſe the High Prieſt, on his
" own Head: though thoſe who had
" receiv'd expreſs Order from God to
" make ſuch like Reproaches to Princes,
" cannot be blam'd for it. But Mr. *Si-*
" *mon*, who probably never thought of
" all this, is not aware of this difference;
" and argues always on, without under-
" ſtanding what he finds fault with.

Objecti-

Objection 12.

The Promiſe which Jeſus Chriſt made his Apoſtles, *that the holy Spirit ſhould teach them what they ſhould ſay when they came before the Judges*, ſeems to have been explain'd as a general Promiſe for all that they ſhould ſay; whereas it only relates to what they ſhould ſay for the defence of the Goſpel. *Luc.* Chap. 12. ver. 11. Page 42, &c.

Anſwer.

"The Promiſe is expreſs'd in gene-
"ral terms, and muſt relate to that
"which the Apoſtles ſhould be oblig'd
"to ſay as well for the defence of their
"own Perſons, as for that of the
"Goſpel. For it was of the greateſt
"importance that theſe firſt Miniſters
"of Jeſus Chriſt ſhould then ſay no-
"thing unworthy of the Doctrine of
"which they were the Heraulds. But
"if this Promiſe muſt not be taken
"in ſo large a Senſe, in relation to the
"Diſcourſes which the Apoſtles ſhould
"make before Judges; neither ought
"it to be ſo taken in relation to their
"preaching of the Goſpel. My De-
"ſign was only to ſhew, that ſince the
"words could not be taken in the

" whole extent of their Signification, " it could not from thence be neceſſarily " inferr'd, that the Apoſtles had then " a Prophetic Inſpiration.

Objection 13.

Page 58. The Promiſe (*John* 16.) that *when the Spirit of Truth ſhall come, it ſhall lead you into all Truth*, ought not to be underſtood ſo, as if it were intirely accompliſh'd the day of *Pentecoſt*; but as a thing that ſhould be accompliſh'd according to the occaſions and neceſſities that the Apoſtles ſhould be in, of knowing ſome further Truths. But it ſeems as if Mr. *N.* ſuppos'd that this Promiſe is ordinarily underſtood, as if it ought to have been accompliſh'd all at once.

Anſwer.

" The reaſon of my inſiſting upon " that was to make appear that this " Promiſe, though conceiv'd in ſo ge- " neral terms, ought neceſſarily to re- " ceive ſome Qualification; and conſe- " quently that it ought not to be under- " ſtood, like an Axiom of Geometry, " in the utmoſt Signification of its " Terms. Now that being once gran- " ted, it cannot be made appear that

" this

"this Promiſe relates to a Prophetic "Inſpiration. There is a Paſſage very "like this in the firſt Epiſtle of St. *John*, "Chap. 2. ver. 27. *But the anointing "which ye have received of him, abideth in "you: and ye need not that any Man "teach you: but, as the ſame anointing "teacheth you of all things, and is Truth, "and is no Lie: and even as it hath taught "you, ye ſhall abide in him.* It is appa- "rent that this cannot be underſtood "ſtrictly, ſince St. *John* ſpeaks to all "the Chriſtians to whom he writ.

Objection 14.

Whereas it has been affirmed that the Apoſtles did not agree (*Acts* 15.) till after they had diſputed a great while; it is not ſaid in that Chapter, That the Apoſtles diſputed; but only that *When there had been much diſputing*, Peter *roſe up*, &c. Page 57.

Anſwer.

"Two things were conſidered in this "Hiſtory. The firſt is, The Opinion "that Men had of the Apoſtles, *viz.* "That they were not look'd upon as "Perſons infallible, whenſoever they "began to ſpeak of the Goſpel; ſince

" they were not believ'd just at their
" first speaking. The second is, The
" Conduct of the Apostles, on this oc-
" casion, which is express'd in these
" terms: *The Apostles and Elders came*
" *together for to consider of this matter.*
" *And when there had been much disputing,*
" Peter *rose up, and said*, &c. The com-
" mon Opinion is, that when the De-
" bate was about Doctrinal Matters,
" the Truth was immediately presented
" to the Minds of the Apostles, with-
" out any need of Meditation. This
" is undoubtedly true as to the things
" that Jesus Christ had taught them
" clearly: And they needed no extraor-
" dinary Inspiration to call them to mind.
" But this Principle is extended by some
" to all the Functions of their Charge.
" Now I ask if that were so, what need
" was there that the Apostles should
" not only meet, but also talk a long
" while together? The first that had
" spoke would have found all the rest of
" the same mind, and there would have
" been no more to do but for him to pro-
" nounce upon the Question, according
" to their general, though tacit, Agree-
" ment. It cannot be said there was
" no Conference amongst the Apostles

" and

" and Elders concerning this Doctrine;
" since St. *Luke*, after having said that the
" *Apostles and Elders came together*, imme-
" diately adds, that *there was much dispu-*
" *ting, and that* Peter *rose up and said*, &c.
" Neither can the Principle of Mr. *Si-*
" *mon* be here made use of, who says
" *that the Apostles might not determine*
" *any thing by their own Authority, but*
" *by the common Consent of all the Church*,
" and that therefore it was that they
" assembl'd, and expos'd in publick
" their Reasons for not imposing Jewish
" Ceremonies upon the Gentiles. If
" the Apostles were as much inspir'd
" as the Jewish Prophets of the Old
" Testament, it is ridiculous to say
" that they ought to determine nothing
" by their own Authority, but by the
" Consent of all the Church. They
" had no more to do but to declare
" what the holy Spirit had reveal'd to
" them, as did the Prophets; who met
" not together to confer about their
" Prophecies before the pronouncing
" of them; but pronounc'd them as
" soon as God had commanded them,
" without staying for any body's Con-
" sent. And herein they acted not by
" their private Authority, but by the

" Authority that God gave them, in " commanding them to ſpeak to the " People. No more would the Apo- " ſtles have acted by their own private " Authority, in following the Motions " of the holy Spirit.

" But Mr. *Simon* has fancy'd a very " particular ſort of Inſpiration in the " Apoſtles. He ſays *it was neceſſary they* Ibid. " *ſhould declare that they determin'd no-* " *thing, which was not conformable to the* " *holy Scriptures, and to the Doctrine* " *which they had receiv'd from their* " *Maſter; and that for that Reaſon it was* " *neceſſary to deliberate thereupon in Aſ-* " *ſemblies; in which their Opinions happen'd* " *to be ſometimes divided.* A Man muſt " be very acute, that can comprehend " how Men inſpir'd after a Prophetic " manner could be of different Opini- " ons. But Mr. *Simon* clears this Diffi- " culty wonderfully in the following " words. *We ought not* (ſays he) *to be* " *ſurpriz'd at this Diverſity of Opinions,* " *ſince every one grounded his particular* " *one upon Inſpiration.* Now this is that " which ſhould have hinder'd them " from being of different Opinions; " ſince aſſuredly God inſpires not ſeve- " ral Opinions about one and the ſame " thing.

"thing. It is all one as if one ſhould "ſay that we ought not to be ſurpriz'd, "that of two Prophets, one ſhould ſay "a thing ſhall happen, and the other "that it ſhall not happen, becauſe they "both ground their Predictions *upon* "*Inſpiration*. And indeed Mr. *Simon* "corrects himſelf, after a faſhion, by "adding; *Or rather upon the Authority* "*of the Scriptures, and the Light which* "*they had receiv'd from Religion.* If he "underſtands by the Inſpiration of the "Apoſtles, nothing *but the Light which* "*they had receiv'd from Religion*, why "does he make all this ado; ſince here-"in we agree with him? He ought to "tell us whether or no, when the Apo-"ſtles ſpoke by Inſpiration, they did "any thing, but expreſs, in their own "way, the Reaſonings which God had "put ready fram'd into their Minds. "If that be ſo, how can we conceive "that their Opinions ſhould not be "one and the ſame? And if he in-"ſpir'd them not with the Reaſonings "they uſed, then we cannot attribute "Prophetic Inſpiration to them; ſince "it is therein that Prophetic Inſpira-"tion conſiſts. It is very abſurd there-"fore to believe, that all the Reaſon-

"ings

" ings the Apostles us'd in preaching
" the Gospel, and all those we read in
" their Books, were inspir'd. For it
" is therein that the Inspiration of the
" Apostles is ordinarily conceiv'd to
" consist. This is that uniform, con-
" stant, and ordinary Inspiration which
" *Mr. Simon* comprehends not, because
" he never thought well upon it. Nor
" indeed does he know what Opinion
" he is of. Sometimes he speaks like
" the generality of Divines, sometimes
" again he openly contradicts them, as
" may be seen by the words I have cited.
" He must study a little better this
" matter, if he will have us answer him:
" For it is very likely that for the most
" part he understands not himself. I
" will give but one Example more of it.
" (It is that which he says concerning
" the Author of *Ecclesiastes*, p. 138.) For
" we need but read his words, to find
" that the Prior of *Bolleville* minds not
" what he says. *The Author*, says he, *of this*
" *Work did not design ONLY to perswade*
" *Men to pass their Time in Pleasure.* — To
" which may be added, that *Declamation*
" *being the proper Character of a Preacher,*
" *it is no wonder to see him despise all the*
" *ordinary Busin.ss and Imployments of the*
" *World,*

"*World, and to prefer an easy commodious*
"*Life before all the Troubles that attend a*
"*contrary Practice: For which he is not to*
"*be censur'd as if he were an Epicure, after*
"*the manner that Mr.* N. *here understands*
"*the Opinions of the Epicureans.* He would
"have done well to have told us of
"what sort of Epicurism the Author
"of the *Ecclesiastes* may be accus'd.

Objection 15.

It is a great piece of Boldness to judg four Books of the Old Testament (three that bear the Name of *Solomon*, and that of *Job*) as unworthy to be in the Hebrew Canon. That Liberty of censuring would weaken the Principles of our Religion. For every one by the same Rule may say that such or such a Book is not Canonical, according to his own fancy.

Answer.

"Although we may reject some Books
"of the Old Testament, it does not
"follow that we may do the same by
"all of them. Neither does it follow,
"because many Ancient and Modern
"Divines have thought it would have
"been better not to have joined, with
"the Writings of the Apostles, certain

"Books

" Books that are now in the Canon of
" the New Teſtament, that therefore
" we may reject all the Books of the
" Apoſtles. There are Books that are
" indiſputably of thoſe Authors whoſe
" Name they bear; and there are others
" which have been queſtionable, and
" are ſo ſtill amongſt the Learned; as
" the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that of
" St. *James*, the ſecond of St. *Peter*,
" the two laſt of St. *John*, and that of
" St. *Jude*. Theſe Doubts hinder us
" not from agreeing about the Goſpels,
" and St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles; nor from pro-
" ving clearly that they are the Books
" of thoſe whoſe Name they bear. I
" know not why we may not doubt of
" ſome of the Books of the Old Te-
" ſtament, as well as of ſome of thoſe
" of the New, and why ill Conſe-
" quences ſhould be drawn from their
" Opinions who doubt of ſome of the
" former, when none is drawn from
" theirs that reject the latter. The
" Canon of the Books of the New Te-
" ſtament ought to be of much greater
" importance with us than that of the
" Old. It is a miſtake that we ought
" to receive all or reject all. It is not
" true that we ought to receive all it

" is

"is leſs true that we ought to reject "all. But there is a mean betwixt "theſe two Extreams.

Objection 16.

But what will be ſaid to theſe words of St. *Paul*, 2 *Tim.* III. 16. *All Scripture is of Divine Inſpiration?* For they ought to be read in the vulgar Tranſlation, according to the Greek, and alſo according to the ancient vulgar, *Omnis Scriptura divinitùs inſpirata & utilis*; whereas Mr. *N.* reads them, *Omnis Scriptura divinitùs inſpirata utilis eſt.* The Verb *eſt* is not in the Greek, but καὶ, which ſignifies *Et*, is before *utilis*. If this Verb be to be ſupply'd (becauſe it is often wanting in the Hebrew and the Syriac, and conſequently in the Greek of the New Teſtament) it ought to be done in this manner, *Omnis Scriptura divinitùs inſpirata eſt & utilis.*

Anſwer.

"Mr. *Simon*'s Decrees are not with-"out Appeal. We maintain, againſt "him, that this Paſſage may very well "be thus tranſlated; *All Scripture that* "*is divinely inſpir'd is alſo profitable for* "*Inſtruction, for Reproof*, &c. πᾶσα "γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος, &c.

"So

" So the vulgar tranſlates it; which
" Mr. *Simon* improperly corrects, and
" which the Gentlemen of *Port-Royal*
" have judiciouſly follow'd. St. *Paul*'s
" Deſign favours this Verſion. He tells
" *Timothy, that the holy Scriptures are*
" *able to make him wiſe unto Salvation:*
" to which he adds, *That all Scripture*
" *given by Inſpiration of God is profitable*
" *for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Inſtructi-*
" *on in Righteouſneſs; that the Man of*
" *God may be perfect*, &c. Theſe words
" are a ſort of Explanation of thoſe
" foregoing, where St. *Paul* ſets down
" after what manner the holy Scriptures
" may inſtruct to Salvation. There is
" a tacit oppoſition here between Holy
" Writ and certain prophane Studies;
" As will eaſily appear, if we go back
" a little higher to find the Thred of
" St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe, and obſerve the
" occaſion of his ſaying, *That all Writ*
" *divinely inſpir'd is profitable*, &c. St. *Paul*
* Ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. " deſcribes in the * beginning of the
" Chapter a ſort of wicked People,
" whom in the 5*th* Verſe he orders
" *Timothy* to avoid. The Characters
" he marks them by ſuit very well
" to the *Gnoſtics*. But it matters not
" of whom He ſpeaks. It ſuffices

" that

"that we obſerve that they were Per-
"ſons who boaſted of teaching their
"Hearers many things; witneſs thoſe
"* Women they had ſeduc'd, *which* * Ver. 6, 7.
"*were always learning, and never arriv'd*
"*to the knowledg of the Truth.* † But † Ver. 8, 9,
"the Apoſtle foretels their Seduction
"ſhould not long continue. ‖ He re- ‖ Ver. 10, 11.
"preſents to *Timothy* that he had fully
"known his Doctrine, his manner of
"Life, and the Perſecutions he had
"ſuffer'd; in order to ſtrengthen him
"by his Example. * He declares that * Ver. 12, 13.
"the Good ſhall always be perſecuted,
"and that there ſhall ſtill be Seducers,
"and Perſons ſeduced. † *But Thou*, con- † V. 14. & fol.
"tinues he, *be ſtedfaſt in the things*
"*thou haſt learn'd, and haſt been aſſured*
"*of, knowing from whom thou haſt learn'd*
"*them, and that from a Child thou haſt*
"*known the holy Scriptures, which are able*
"*to make thee wiſe unto Salvation through*
"*Faith in Jeſus Chriſt.* He oppoſes
"plainly the Study of the holy Scrip-
"tures to the Study of fabulous Do-
"ctrines; which ſome Impoſtors then
"taught, and whereof he complains in
"many places of his two Epiſtles to *Ti-*
"*mothy* (1 Ep. *Ch.* 1. *v.* 4. *Ch.* 4. *v.* 7. 2 Ep.
"*Ch.* 4. *v.* 4.) And as here he orders

"his

" his dear Diſciple *to continue firm in*
" *thoſe things he had learn'd, and which he*
"*had been aſſur'd of*; he likewiſe ends his
" firſt Epiſtle with this Exhortation,
" *O* Timothy, *keep that which is commit-*
" *ted to thy Truſt, avoiding profane and*
" *vain bablings, and oppoſition of Science*
" *falſly ſo called; which ſome profeſſing,*
" *have err'd concerning the Faith.* And thus
" when he adds, *That all Scripture given*
" *by Inſpiration*, &c. It is as if he had
" ſaid to *Timothy*, That he ought to
" keep cloſe, as he had done hitherto,
" to the ſtudy of the Old Teſtament;
" which would inſtruct him ſufficiently
" in the way to Salvation, by joining
" thereunto Faith in Jeſus Chriſt: Be-
" cauſe all Scripture inſpir'd by God,
" as is a great part of the Old Teſta-
" ment, is profitable for Inſtruction:
" Whereas if he apply'd himſelf to the
" falſe Science that ſome Impoſtors then
" boaſted of, he would cultivate Do-
" ctrines that would be proper for no-
" thing, but to raiſe Diſputes, inſtead of
" edifying; as he had elſe-where told
" him. By this it is evident, that all this
" reaſoning of St. *Paul* does in no wiſe
" ſuppoſe that all the Scripture of the
" Old Teſtament is inſpir'd; and that

" the

"the Apoſtle pretends thereby only to "intimate that the inſpir'd Writings "(without fixing the number of them) "are more profitable than thoſe that "ſome Perſons at that time boaſted of.

"*Rivet* had objected this Paſſage to "*Grotius*, againſt the Opinion of that "incomparable Critic concerning the "Inſpiration of the ſacred Books. Let "us ſee how *Grotius* anſwers "him. * *The place*, ſays he, "(2 *Tim.* Chap. 3. v. 16.) *has* "*another ſignification than D.* Ri-"vet *thinks: For St.* Paul *ſays* "*not*, *All Writing is divinely in-*"*ſpir'd.* (*For how many are the* "*Writings of human Invention?*) "*Nor does he mean that all that* "*is inſpir'd is divinely inſpir'd.* "*That would be trifling. But* "*this is his meaning: All Scrip-*"*ture that is divinely inſpir'd* "(*that is the Word of Prophecy,* "*as St.* Peter *ſtiles it*, 2 *Ep.* "*Chap.* 1. v. 19.) *is not only* "*uſeful in its own time, to* "*ſhow God's Præſcience, and to* "*give Authority to the Prophets:* "*but is moreover at all times* "*profitable: becauſe it contains*

* Locus 2 Tim. 3. 16. alium ſenſum habet quam putat D. Rivetus. Non enim hoc dicit Paulus, Omnis Scriptura eſt Θεόπνευστος divinitus inſpirata; quam multæ enim ſunt Scripturæ humani ingenii? Nec hoc vult omnem eam quæ eſt Θεόπνευστος eſſe Θεόπνευστον; id enim eſſet nugari: ſed hoc vult, Omnem ſcripturam quæ à Deo inſpirata eſt (id eſt λόγον προφητικὸν ſermonem propheticum, ut loquitur Petrus 2 Ep. ch. 1. v. 19.) non in hoc tantum valuiſſe ſuo tempore, ut oſtenderet Dei Præſcientiam, & Prophetis auctoritatem daret, verum ſempereſſe utilem, quia ſimul multa con-

continet documenta perpetua, vitiorum reprehensiones, excitamenta and justiam. Hunc sensum recte vidit Syrus, sic interpretans; utilitas est ad

" *many standing Rules, Reproofs of Vices,* " *Incitements to Righteousness,* &c. *This* " *Sense was rightly observ'd by the Syriac* " *Interpreter who thus renders it*; In the " Scripture, which is written by the " Spirit, there is profit in respect of " Doctrine, *&c.*

In Scriptura, quæ per Spiritum scripta est, utilitas est ad doctrinam, *&c.*

" This Passage then of St. *Paul* proves " nothing against me; let Mr. *Simon* " say what he pleases. He seems not " to understand Christian Religion " throughly enough, to treat of these " matters.

These, Sir, are the principal Objections that have been made to Mr. *N.* against his Essay concerning the Inspiration of the sacred Pen-Men. You may judg whether he has solv'd the Difficulties propos'd or no. For my part I will not judg of that Question. But this I dare boldly say; that Mr. *Simon* is not the Man that will run him down; and that the Answers you have now read, are plausible enough to puzzle an abler Man than he. I am, *&c.*

THE

THE FIFTH LETTER.

I Am perſwaded, Sir, that the two laſt Letters I writ you, will have fully ſatisfied thoſe among your Friends, who wiſh'd that the Writing about Inſpiration had been ſuppreſs'd, or who deſir'd ſome Explanation of the Author's Opinion, or even who believ'd they were in the wrong that ſaid it was hard to confute it. We muſt now try to give ſome Satisfaction to thoſe who have ſaid that this Opinion leads to Deiſm, and that our Friend was infected with the deteſtable Opinions of the Deiſts. Now I having openly maintain'd the contrary, he has impos'd upon me the Task of juſtifying him in this Particular. And I think I can evidently demonſtrate, that they who have brought this Accuſation againſt our Friend, have therein violated that

which is moſt ſacred in Chriſtian Religion; and that while they endeavour to maintain it by a Zeal, not only wanting Knowledg, but alſo void of Charity, they have not ſufficiently reflected upon the true Proofs of the Divinity of our Religion, and upon the Method us'd by many of thoſe who have undertaken to defend it againſt Atheiſts and Infidels. But I confeſs to you I dare not promiſe to my ſelf ever to ſatisfy intirely this ſort of People; becauſe they are ſuch as fancy they know every thing. They have given over all Study; they examine nothing; and they think they ſhould do a thing unworthy of their Character, if they ſhould confeſs they had condemn'd any one wrongfully, and if they abated never ſo little of the heat of their Zeal. This Zeal, or rather blind Paſſion, which is made up of Choler, and animated by Superſtition, Pride and Envy, diſcompoſes them ſo violently, and with ſo little Intermiſſion, that it is very hard to find a moment wherein they are fit to hear quietly the Juſtifications of thoſe, whom they have too raſhly condemned. It is not amiſs however to tell them our Reaſons.

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If they themſelves will not hear them, yet perhaps theſe Reaſons may prevent ſome other Perſons of more ingenuous Diſpoſitions from forming ſuch raſh Judgments, as the vehement Declamations of theſe implacable Zealots would otherwiſe move them to.

Two things ought here to be diſtinguiſh'd: The Perſon, and the Opinions. A Man may have Opinions, the Conſequences whereof are very evil and very dangerous, without being aware of theſe Conſequences, how neceſſarily ſoever they may ſeem unto others to follow from them. I have made this plain in the beginning of my firſt Letter on this Subject. It ought not then to be concluded, becauſe a Man embraces a certain Opinion, that therefore he admits all the Conſequences. This Truth is own'd by every one; but little made uſe of by any, when they paſs Judgment upon thoſe that are oppoſite to their Party. Nevertheleſs, none that are equitable can refuſe to allow this Juſtification of our Friend; I mean that proteſting, as he does, an utter abhorrence of thoſe impious Conſequences, which in his Judgment are unduly wreſted from his

Opinions, he himſelf (at leaſt) ought to be abſolv'd, although his Doctrine be condemned.

Natural Equity obliges us to believe that a Man is perſwaded of a thing when he affirms it, and when we have no evident ſigns of his deſign to deceive us. This alſo is a Rule in Morality generally agreed upon, but of which as little uſe is made as of the foregoing one. But let Men do what they will; it muſt be acknowledg'd, that thoſe who refuſe to believe our Friend, when he affirms that he is perfectly convinc'd of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, do violate the Charity, and the Equity, which we ought to have naturally one for another; ſeeing they have no evident ſign to convince them that this Proteſtation of his is hypocritical.

The Truth is, theſe Zelots, who judg amiſs of his Piety, ground their raſh Judgment but upon very light ſuſpicions. They believe that our Friend has diſcover'd but part of his Opinions concerning the Inſpiration of the holy Writers, for fear of too much thwarting the Public, and loſing altogether his Reputation. But he, on the other

ſide,

ſide, proteſts that he has laid open the very bottom of his Thoughts, without any Reſerve; and without hiding any thing, which he thought might contribute to diſcover the whole Extent of his Opinion in this matter. This is all he can do to repel ſo unjuſt a Suſpicion. If they who frame a raſh Judgment upon ſo ill-grounded Suſpicions, met with the like Uſage, none of them would be found innocent. It might always be ſaid, when they maintain any thing from whence an ill Conſequence may be drawn (and from what may not that be done?) that they ſpeak not all they think, for fear of being cry'd down, and loſing their Penſions. The Zeal, for example, of which they are ſo proud, might paſs for an Effect of an artificial Policy; by which they endeavour to render themſelves Maſters of the Peoples Minds; in order to ſatisfy their Ambition, and oppreſs their Enemies. In a word, they ſhould not make one ſtep, which might not be interpreted maliciouſly, and made look odiouſly. But it behoves us and them to remember that Precept of our Saviour, founded upon the plain Light of Na-

Nature, *Do not to another that which ye would not should be done to you.* If the Heat of an indiſcreet Zeal keep them from obſerving this Precept, yet nothing ſhall make us trangreſs it.

I conclude then that our Friend cannot be ill thought of, without wronging the univerſal Rules of Equity and Charity; and in this caſe thoſe Rules will be the more enormouſly broken, by how much the Impiety which our Friend is accus'd of is more deteſtable. Raſh Judgments and ill-grounded Suſpicions are always Crimes, although the matter they relate to be of ſmall importance: but when the Concern is not only the Reputation of a Perſon, but alſo his Life, and which is yet more, his Salvation, they become ſtill more hainous. To affirm that a Man is of an Opinion ſuch as is that of the Deiſts, without having evident Proofs of it, is to ſay that a Man is an Enemy of God and Men; that he is in a State wherein he can expect nothing but the Anger of Heaven; wherein he merits even to be no longer ſuffer'd upon Earth; and it argues that theſe Calumniators, after having made him loſe his good Name, would if they could deprive

deprive him alſo of his Life. Let any reaſonable Man judg, if, without certain and convincing Proofs, a Man may pronounce ſo terrible a Sentence againſt his Neighbour, and not be guilty of the greateſt Injuſtice imaginable.

It ſeems to me, Sir, that this is ſo plain I need dwell no longer upon it. The Perſon of our Friend then being juſtified againſt theſe raſh Suſpicions; we will now ſhow that the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion may be undeniably prov'd, without taking any ſide about the Doctrine of Inſpiration; and conſequently without ſuppoſing the common Opinion. This I intend to do; after I have firſt obſerv'd that ſeveral great Men, and who have paſs'd for good Chriſtians, have held this Opinion without loſing the Reputation they had of Piety. There is not a Man of Worth and Honour among the Proteſtants, who will dare to ſay that *Eraſmus* and *Grotius* were Libertines; and yet both of them defended openly this ſame Opinion. But becauſe there are ſome Divines who eſteem none but thoſe that have been of the Society

they

they live in, I will repeat some remarkable words of a Divine famous amongst the Presbyterians in *England*, and even amongst those on this side the Water. It is Mr. *Richard Baxter*, who speaks thus in an English Book translated not long since into Dutch, and intituled, *The Saints everlasting Rest.*

In 4° *Lond.* 1656. Edit. 6. par. 2. ch. 3. Sect. 2. pag. 210.

22. *Though all Scripture be of Divine Authority: yet he who believeth but some one Book, that containeth the Substance of the Doctrine of Salvation, may be sav'd: much more they that have doubted but of some particular Books.* 23. *They that take the Scripture to be but the Writings of godly honest Men, and so to be only a means of making known Christ, having a practical Precedency to the Writings of other godly Men: and do believe in Christ upon those strong Grounds which are drawn from his Doctrine, Miracles, &c. rather than upon the Testimony of the Writing, as being purely infallible and divine, may yet have a divine and saving Faith.* 24. *Much more those that believe the whole Writing to be of Divine Inspiration where it handleth the Substance, but doubt whether God infallibly guided them in every Circumstance.* And in the next

Page. 32. *The Circumſtantials are many of them divine, yet ſo as they have in them ſomething humane, as the bringing of St.* Paul's *Cloke and the Parchments, and (as it ſeems) his Counſel about Marriage*, &c. 33. *Much more is there ſomething human in the Method and Phraſe, which is not ſo immediately divine as the Doctrine.* 34. *Yet is there nothing ſinfully humane, and therefore nothing falſe in all.* 35. *But all innocent Imperfection here is in the Method and Phraſe, which if we deny, we muſt renounce moſt of our Logick and Rhetorick.* Nothing can be more expreſly ſaid for the Juſtification of our Friend. Thoſe who have a value for Mr. *Baxter*, muſt forgo their Eſteem of him; or elſe not condemn ſo lightly thoſe who in his Judgment may have a ſaving Faith, together with ſome Opinions different from thoſe commonly receiv'd.

It may likewiſe be obſerv'd, that many of thoſe who have writ of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, have prov'd it without ſuppoſing the particular Inſpiration of the Hiſtorians of the New Teſtament to be ſuch as it is ordinarily taken to be; as *Grotius*, whoſe

whoſe Book has been alike eſteem'd by all Parties. Which ſhows that our Belief is not founded upon this Suppoſition; and that conſequently one may be a good Chriſtian without admitting it. But it is better to repreſent this by an Example, which will give you a more lively Impreſſion of what I aim at.

I will therefore now indeavour, in as few words as is poſſible, to give you the Idea of a Method that ſeems to me very ſtrong, and very proper to convince a Libertine of the Truth of our Religion, without once mentioning any thing of particular Inſpiration. I do not pretend thereby to condemn all other Methods that may be uſed to the like purpoſe; but it ſeems to me that this is the ſimpleſt of all, and ſubject to the fewest Difficulties. You will allow me, Sir, this ſmall Digreſſion; which may perhaps not be unuſeful, in a time when there are every where ſo many that doubt of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

The firſt, and the greateſt Objection the Libertines make us is, That our Judg-

Judgments are pre-poſſeſs'd, which hinders us from being undeceiv'd. We ſay the ſame of them; and maintain that it is nothing but ſenſual Inclinations that raiſe thoſe Difficulties in their Minds, which would vaniſh if they examin'd them without Paſſion. It is not juſt that either they or we ſhould take for granted our Pre-poſſeſſions, as Principles demonſtrated, or which need not be demonſtrated. Let us then act on both ſides as if we had not yet eſpous'd any Party, and let us urge nothing that is not founded upon Principles which both ſides acknowledg.

It is agreed that there are certain Characters by which we may be aſſur'd whether a thing has been done or no, and by which we may diſtinguiſh the Truth or Falſhood of a Hiſtory. If we do not agree in that, we are *Pyrrhoniens*; or, to give it a better Name, altogether ſenſeleſs: for none but a Mad-Man can doubt of the Truth of all the Hiſtories in the World. But farther, we muſt alſo agree in another thing, which is no leſs certain. It is, that there are certain Matters of Fact, the Truth whereof is better conceiv'd

than

than it can be prov'd; and which are of such a nature, that unless a Man be in a proper Disposition of Mind he can hardly be induc'd to believe them. For Example, If any one should tell us here that the Inquisition of *Spain* and *Italy* has approv'd the Works of *Calvin*, and allow'd the People to read them in *Spanish* and *Italian*; although it is impossible for us to believe it, and that we are firmly perswaded of the contrary, we should not be able to convince a Person who should be obstinate in maintaining it, until we had given him evident Proofs thereof. In like manner, if there were false Witnesses ready to swear that one of our Friends, (whose Vertue had been well known to us for divers Years, and who but just then was gone out of our Company) went then immediately in cold Blood to assassinate a Person unknown to him, for no other reason but only to make an Anatomical Dissection of his Body; it is certain we should not believe them, although it might not be in our Power to prove judicially the contrary.

It is easy to imagine a thousand Examples of such like Truths, which we appre-

apprehend better than we can prove. That being ſuppos'd, if we come to the Chriſtian Religion, there occurs at the very firſt a difficulty in diſcerning what are the Doctrines of this Religion: for Chriſtians have great Controverſies among themſelves about their Belief. There would be no end of going about to examine all theſe Controverſies. Let us therefore ſuſpend our Judgment thereupon, and ſee firſt wherein all Chriſtians are agreed. They all agree, for Example, that moſt of the Books of the New Teſtament are the Writings of thoſe Authors whoſe Name they bear, and who writ them more than ſixteen hundred Years ago; that the Hiſtory therein is true, and that we ought to obey the Commandments therein contain'd. This Obedience may be reduc'd to theſe general Heads; a rendering to God the Service due to him; a truſting in his Promiſes; and a keeping his Commandments, in what concerns both our ſelves and our Neighbour. But this ſuppoſes a Belief of all thoſe Scriptural Truths without which a Man cannot perform his Duty; as that there is a God, abſolutely perfect, who has

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ſent Jeſus Chriſt into the World to draw Men from their Sins, and guide them to eternal Salvation; that this Jeſus has been rais'd from the Dead, and that he now reigns in Heaven, &c. All Chriſtians agree in all this.

Let us ſuſpend ſtill our Jugdment concerning Doctrines, and ſpeak yet only of the practical Part of our Religion. It cannot be deny'd but that if all Men liv'd according to the Precepts of the Goſpel; and that, out of the hope of another Life, they betook themſelves with Care to adore the Creator of the Univerſe, to live always in Temperance, and Sobriety, and to do conſtantly to their Neighbour as they deſire their Neighbour ſhould do to them; It cannot be deny'd, I ſay, but this manner of living would be very agreeable and very advantagious to Human Society. We ſhould not then hear any words ſpoken that could cauſe us Trouble, or that would kindle Diviſions in Religion. There would be no Sickneſs through Intemperance, no Vexation, nor any Quarrel occaſion'd by Debauchery. The doing Wrong to ones Neighbour, and the ſuffering any Inconvenience through the Inhumanity

manity or Malice of Men would be things unknown: Men would help one another in all their Needs, with all the Fervency and Earneſtneſs that could be deſir'd: If by miſtake any of them had been the occaſion of Inconvenience to one another, they would mutually pardon one another, and repair that Damage by all ſorts of Services. The love of Honours, or of Riches, would trouble no Man's Mind, nor cauſe any Envy or Diſcord. In a word, the Mind being in a perfect Tranquillity, the Body as healthful as feeble Nature will admit, and both Mind and Body enjoying the innocent Pleaſures which the Goſpel allows, this amiable Life would not be quitted but for the enjoyment of another, freed from all the inevitable Inconveniences entail'd by Nature upon the Inhabitants of this Earth.

All that have any Idea of the Rules of Morality taught by Jeſus Chriſt, muſt neceſſarily agree in this Truth; that by generally obſerving them, Men would be exceedingly happy. But it may perhaps be ask'd, Where is there in the World a Society in which, Men live conformably to theſe Rules of Morality? That is not the Queſtion.

It is ſufficient for our preſent purpoſe that there are at this time many Nations that make Profeſſion of it, though they live not up to the Practice. Let us enquire whether theſe Nations invented thoſe Rules, or receiv'd them from their Predeceſſors? They all tell us they are not the Inventers; and it may well be judg'd, by their way of living, that they ſay true: For it is not probable they ſhould have invented the Precepts of the Goſpel, and yet live ſo contrary to them. Inventions always ſavour ſomething of the temper of the Spirit of the Inventors.

But we have no need of Arguments to convince us of this: We may examine from Age to Age the Authors that are left us, beginning at our own, and going backwards to that wherein Chriſtian Religion was firſt ſpoken of, to ſee who they were that brought it into the World. We ſhall readily find, by reading thoſe Authors, that it is more than thirteen hundred Years ſince the *Roman Emperors* being become Chriſtians, Chriſtianity has flouriſh'd in a great part of *Europe*, *Aſia*, and *Africa*. Since that time we may be convinced, by a very great number of Chriſti-

Chriſtian Authors, that Profeſſion has been conſtantly made of believing that the Morality taught us in the Goſpel came from Heaven. If we go yet further backwards, we ſhall find that even under the Pagan Emperors there was a great multitude of Chriſtians that profeſs'd the ſame Doctrine. We have many Chriſtian Authors, of thoſe times, who aſſure us of it. But, without ſtaying to reckon up needleſly Authors ſufficiently known, let us examine in what Age Chriſtianity began firſt to be ſpoken of. All Chriſtians agree that it was under the Reign of *Tiberius*; and if we conſult Heathen Authors, we ſhall ſee that before that time it was altogether unknown. *Tacitus*, who was born towards the end of the Reign of *Claudius*, or about the beginning of that of *Nero*, ſays that *Nero*, after having ſet *Rome* on fire in divers places, and thereby deſtroy'd the City, accus'd the Chriſtians of it, and made them ſuffer horrible Puniſhments. Upon that occaſion he ſpeaks of the beginning of Chriſtianity in theſe terms. *The Author of this Sect* (ſays he) *was Chriſt, who in the Reign of* Tiberius *was put to death by* Pontius Pilate *Governour of* Judæa. An. l. 15. c. 44.

This dangerous Superſtition, continues he, in ſpeaking of the Chriſtian Religion, *though nipp'd in the Bud, broke out a freſh, and ſpread not only through* Judæa, *where the Miſchief firſt began, but came even into* Rome *it ſelf, where all things ſhameful and abominable are brought, and find Perſons ready to join with and uphold them. Preſently as many as confeſs'd they were Chriſtians, were ſeiz'd on, and ſoon after a great many more were diſcover'd, but were not found guilty of the Fire, though they were the Objects of the public Hatred*, &c. You ſee here the Teſtimony of a Heathen Author, who being born in the beginning of Chriſtianity, and very well vers'd in the Paſſages of his Time, aſſures us of two things then publickly notorious. The one, that the Authors of the Chriſtian Religion had liv'd in *Judæa* in the Reign of *Tiberius*, and had been puniſh'd during the Government of *Pontius Pilate*. The other, that after his Death, in few Years, the Embracers of his Doctrine were extreamly multiply'd. *Suetonius* alſo tells us, that in the time of the Emperor *Claudius*, the Chriſtians were baniſh'd out of *Rome*; which ſhows that there were then a great number

In Claud. c. 15.

of

of them in that Capital City.

We find also by the Testimony of another Author, contemporary to *Tacitus*, that the Christians at that time made Profession of the same Morals they teach now a-days. *Pliny* being Proconsul of *Bithynia*, about threescore and ten Years after *Pontius Pilate* had been Governour of *Judea*, by *Trajan*'s Order sought out the Christians within his Province, and inform'd himself with all the care imaginable concerning their Opinions: Hereupon he writes a Letter to *Trajan*, which Letter is still preserv'd. *I was inform'd*, says he, *that all their Crime, or Error, consisted only in that they us'd to assemble themselves upon a certain Night, and to sing together a Hymn to Christ, as to a God: That they all oblig'd themselves by Oath not to any Crime; but on the contrary, that they would not commit Felony, Robbery, or Adultery; and that they would deceive no Man, nor break a Trust: This done, they dispers'd and return'd again after sometime to eat together, which they did in common, and without any harm: But that they had given over doing it upon my Proclamation, wherein, according to your Orders, I had forbidden all sorts of Conventicles. This* Lib. 10. Ep. 97.

made me believe that I could not get out the Truth better than by putting to the Rack two Women Servants, whom they call Diaconesses; but I discover'd nothing but a strange and excessive Superstition. They that understand the Latin Tongue, will not wonder that *Tacitus* and *Pliny* make use of the word *Superstition*. The Romans gave that Name to all sorts of Religious Worship that were not establish'd by public Authority.

Two such Witnesses as these cannot be excepted against; Seeing it is evident they had no favour for Christians, and were perhaps the most able Men of their time; but especially if we consider that they treat of matters of Fact, which they themselves had either seen, or which were known by all Men, as was the Death of Jesus Christ under *Pontius Pilate*. The Writings that we have of Christians living between the times of *Pilate* and those of *Tacitus* or *Trajan*, attest the same Truths: They date the beginning of Christianity from the same Christ that *Pilate* put to Death, and they preach to us precisely the same Morals.

We must then necessarily allow that there was in *Judea*, during the Reign

Reign of *Tiberius*, a Perſon that laid the Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion, and had many Diſciples. Let us now examine ſome of his firſt Diſciples, and ſee what ſort of People they were. Let us read the Epiſtle which *Clement*, Biſhop of *Rome*, writ to the Chriſtians of *Corinth*, forty Years after the Death of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and in the beginning of the Raign of *Veſpaſian*. There appears in this Epiſtle a Spirit of Peace, of Charity, of Humility, and many lively and pathetical Exhortations to the Obſervation of the Goſpel-Morals. He reproves ſeverely thoſe that had not obſerv'd them, but commends thoſe that had. In the beginning of that Epiſtle, he ſays among other things, *That the Chriſtians of* Corinth *had labour'd day and night for their Brethren (to the end that the number of the Elect might be ſav'd) in applying themſelves to Works of Mercy, and of a good Conſcience; That they had been ſincere, without Malice, and without remembring the Ill that any of them might formerly have done to one another; That all Diviſion and Schiſm was abhorr'd by them; That they were afflicted for their Neighbour's Failings; That they look'd upon his Neceſſi-*

ties as their own; That they never repented them of well-doing, but were always ready to do all sorts of good Works; That in their Conversation, full of Vertue, and worthy of Veneration, they did all things in the fear of God, whose Commandments were writ in their Hearts. He adds afterwards, *That he had known many Christians, who, to redeem others out of Slavery, had put themselves in Chains; That many having sold themselves for Slaves, had maintain'd others out of the price of their own Liberty.*

Page 123. Ed. Ox. in 12°.

The Masters of this *Clement* were the first Disciples of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, who was the first Teacher of Christianity; and he gives Testimony of their great Piety. Indeed if we read their Writings, we find nothing in them but what speaks a profound Veneration of the Deity, an extream Tenderness towards all Men, and an extraordinary Strictness in all that concerns the Government of a Man's Self. Let us chuse which we will of them, we shall find nothing in their Works but what tends to Piety. If some of their Writings have been question'd, let us take those concerning which there never was any Question; Or, without looking further, the Gospel according to St. *Luke*, and

and the firſt Epiſtle of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians*, which are cited by *Clement*, and we ſhall perceive every where the ſame Morals which they endeavour to implant in the Hearts of their Diſciples.

I ſuppoſe all along that the Reader has ſome knowledg of the Precepts of the Goſpel, and has given ſome attention to what I ſaid at the beginning; And then I dare boldly ſay, that unleſs he have loſt all Senſe, he will acknowledg that there is nothing more reaſonable than the Morals of the Goſpel; and that it were to be wiſh'd that all the World obſerv'd them. The Apoſtles then in exhorting their Hearers to live after a manner ſo reaſonable, and ſo profitable to human Society, requir'd nothing of them contrary to Reaſon, or to the true Intereſts of all Mankind. And this puts me in mind of the Saying of a Perſon, that once had no great Opinion of the Truth of our Religion. When the Morals, which the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt preach'd throughout the World, were thus livelily deſcrib'd to him, he could not but fall into theſe words, which the Evidence of the thing drew from him, *I wiſh all the World had believ'd them.*

This

This Doctrine of the Apoſtles ought undoubtedly to make all thoſe who love human Society, and their own Advantages, to liſten to it. But it may here be objected that perhaps the Apoſtles preach'd not this Doctrine, but in deſign to inſinuate themſelves into the Minds of the People; and afterwards, upon pretext of Piety, to get from them whatſoever they had a mind to. But to anſwer that Objection, in the firſt place I obſerve, and ſuppoſe it will be granted me, that this Suſpicion has no Foundation in the Doctrine which they preach'd. For that condemns the love of Honours, of Riches, and of Pleaſures. There cannot ſo much as one ſingle Paſſage of their Works be alledg'd that favours Ambition, Covetouſneſs, or Concupiſcence.

This being ſo, this Suſpicion can be grounded but upon one of theſe two things; Either that the Apoſtles could hope to make ſome advantage of this their Doctrine, when it ſhould be receiv'd; or that they actually made it, when they preach'd it. I underſtand here by Advantage A Good out-ballancing all the Inconveniences that the Apoſtles underwent in preaching the Goſpel,

Goſpel, or at leaſt ſuch a one as they eſteem'd in that degree. It is not probable, if they were Deceivers, but that they propos'd an Advantage to themſelves greater than the Pains they took: Otherwiſe they might juſtly be look'd upon as Fools, which they cannot (without great Impertinence) be ſuppos'd to have been by any that read their Writings.

Now the Apoſtles could not hope to make any Advantage of their Doctrine, unleſs it were receiv'd by the generality of thoſe amongſt whom they preach'd it. For without that, they would have been expos'd to perpetual Perſecution. None but Fools could expect to live quietly amongſt People vehemently prepoſſeſt with Opinions directly contrary to thoſe they reſolv'd to profeſs and teach; People that believed themſelves oblig'd for the Intereſt of the State, and of Religion, to take away both the Eſtates and Lives of thoſe that oppos'd their Superſtition. Such were the *Romans*, the *Greeks*, and the *Jews*, in the times of the Apoſtles. They muſt then have hoped that their preaching would take ſuch effect as would draw after them the greateſt part

part of the World. But that was impoſſible to be hop'd for, by any that had never ſo little knowledg of the Diſpoſition of the Heart of Man. And the Apoſtles, who had a great ſhare of this Knowledg, as appears by their Writings, could leſs than others imagine ſuch a thing. The *Jews* were ſo paſſionately wedded to their Ceremonies, that there was not the leaſt likelihood of ſucceeding with them. The *Romans* and *Greeks* were ſo over Head and Ears in Pleaſures, ſo covetous, ſo ambitious, that the ſmall number amongſt them who had not loſt all thought of Vertue, ſpeak of the Manners of that Age with Horror and Deteſtation. The Hiſtories of both thoſe People (if we judg of them by the Ideas of the Goſpel) preſent us, in the Events of thoſe Times, with a Picture of the moſt horrible Corruption that ever was. And can it then be imagin'd that the Apoſtles ſhould hope to draw to their Opinions the generality of thoſe that liv'd in ſuch times? How could they promiſe themſelves, that People ſo blinded by their Paſſions, and ſo harden'd in their Crimes, would ever relent? No, they tell us plainly

plainly (after their Maſter) that they hoped not to make the Goſpel be receiv'd by any great number of Perſons, in compariſon of thoſe that would remain in Unbelief.

But if yet it be ſuppos'd that the Simplicity of the Apoſtles might have incourag'd them to hope for the Converſion of the greateſt part of the Roman Empire, Experience however would at length have undeceiv'd them; ſince after having preach'd many Years they were forc'd to acknowledg they had gain'd very few. Hiſtory ſhows us clearly, that for ſome Ages after the beginning of Chriſtianity there were much fewer Chriſtians in the Roman Empire than Heathens. Thus then we ſee that the Apoſtles were neceſſarily expoſed to cruel Perſecutions all their Lives; ſcorn'd, and hated alike by Jews and Gentiles, they could have no Recompence any way proportionable to their Labours. And ſo they tell us plainly, that they expected nothing but Afflictions in this Life; and that it was all they hoped for from Men of this World, in Recompence of what they undertook in preaching unto them

a

a Doctrine so reasonable as are the Gospel-Morals. Nor were they deceiv'd; for after having suffer'd great Torments, they in the end lost their Lives in an ignominious manner, by the hands of Executioners, asserting to the last the Truth of the Doctrine they had preach'd. *It was by great Injustice and Malice*, says *Clement*, whom we cited before, *that* Peter *underwent not one or two, but many Pains; and after having thereby born Testimony to the Truth, went to the place of Glory that was due to him. It was through the like Malice of Men that* Paul *receiv'd the Reward of his Patience; having been seven times put in Chains, whipp'd and ston'd; Having been the Herauld of the Gospel in the East and in the West, and having render'd his Faith illustrious; Having preach'd Justice to all the Earth, and being arriv'd at the utmost part of the West, after having born Testimony to the Truth before the principal Rulers there, he departed out of this World.*

This Event of the preaching of the Apostles, absolutely overthrows the second Ground whereon Men might build suspicions of their Sincerity, *viz.* that

that they had made an Advantage by their preaching equivalent to the Troubles and Dangers they were ſubject to. If they were eſteem'd by a ſmall number of Perſons of mean Condition, that hinder'd them not from being deſpis'd by all the reſt of Mankind, Jews and Gentiles; from being ill treated and perſecuted; from ſuffering extream Poverty; and at laſt from dying upon Scaffolds and Croſſes; as we have ſeen by what *Clemens* ſays, and as all their Diſciples unanimouſly affirm. One of the Apoſtles themſelves alſo tells us the ſame thing in one of his Epiſtles: *Even to this preſent hour* (ſays he) *we hunger and thirſt, and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own Hands.* And again, *If in this Life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all Men moſt miſerable.* 1 Cor. IV. 11. Ib. XV. 19.

There is no body ſurely that has common Senſe, who to obtain the Eſteem of a ſmall number of People, without Power and without Reputation, would ſuffer ſo great Troubles, become the Horror of Mankind, be us'd as the worſt of Men, and as thoſe that

that were condem'd to the Amphitheatres, *be made a Spectacle to the People.* A Man may be tickl'd with the itch of Glory, when he fancies to himself that most of those among whom he lives will applaud that which he is doing: But it never came into the Mind of any Man to expose himself to long Sufferings, and at last to a cruel and ignominious Death, to the end only to be esteem'd by a very few contemptible People, and in the mean while to be look'd upon as a wicked and as a mad Man, by the greatest part of those with whom he liv'd.

Ib. IV. 9.

The Truth of these Matters of Fact cannot be deny'd: That they preach'd the Doctrine which we read in their Writings (and whereof the Christians still make Profession) in the Reigns of *Tiberius*, and some of the following Emperors: That they liv'd in great Trouble, and under many Afflictions: And that at last they dy'd miserably, in maintaining the Doctrine they had for divers Years publish'd. We have seen these Truths attested by Heathens, as well as by their own Disciples.

If

If we would ſuppoſe that the Apoſtles liv'd after a voluptuous manner, and contrary to the Morals they preach'd, we muſt be oblig'd to deny their having undergone thoſe Sufferings which are atteſted by their Diſciples; the firſt whereof, in imitation of their Maſters, as they themſelves ſay, offer'd themſelves couragiouſly to very many Afflictions, without making any advantage thereof in this Life. *To theſe Men*, ſays *Clement*, ſpeaking of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, *who liv'd after a divine manner, there joyn'd themſelves a great number of the Elect, who having ſuffer'd many Puniſhments and Torments, have left us a fair Example.* Nay, ſuppoſing their living ſo voluptuouſly, we muſt alſo ſuppoſe an Abſurdity that is inconſiſtent even with common Senſe; *viz.* That they preaching that Men ought to undergo much Suffering for Religion, exhorting the People to all ſorts of Vertue, and yet living themſelves at their Eaſe (without taking care to practiſe the Precepts they gave to others, except only ſo far as might ſerve to deceive the World) did nevertheleſs make a great number of Diſciples, not only

 ſincere

ſincere Imitators of their Maſter's pretended Vertues, but who alſo dy'd for a Doctrine, for which thoſe that had taught them it refus'd to ſuffer any thing.

It is conceiveable enough that ſeduc'd Perſons may be as thoroughly perſwaded of a Falſhood, as others are of the moſt evident Truths; and may conſequently, in maintenance of a Falſhood, do all that the moſt reſolute Men would do in Juſtification of Truths of the greateſt importance. But it cannot be conceiv'd, that Perſons prepoſſeſs'd from their Infancy with Opinions contrary to thoſe of the Apoſtles, would let themſelves be ſo miſerably ſeduc'd, that after having embrac'd their Doctrine, they would ſuffer for it the moſt cruel Puniſhments, whilſt they ſaw that their Maſters would not undergo any at all for it. Now we ſee, by the Paſſage of *Tacitus* which we cited, that at the beginning of Chriſtianity a great number of People declared themſelves Chriſtians, tho they ſaw that the bare public Profeſſion of that Religion would expoſe them to the Puniſhments due to Incendiaries, and to *Nero*'s Fury. The reaſon

reaſon of this muſt neceſſarily be that ſome of the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, as their Diſciples aſſure us, gave Examples to others. Without that it is impoſſible to conceive they could draw ſo many after them, and eſpecially ſo many who endur'd ſuch horrible Torments for the Religion they learn'd from them.

From all this I draw no other Conſequence than that the Apoſtles were ſincere Perſons, who believed their own Doctrine; as were alſo thoſe who by their Example dy'd for it. They muſt have been truly perſwaded of the thing, that would ſuffer ſo many Inconveniences, Fatigues, and Puniſhments as they ſuffer'd, rather than abandon it.

Now the Apoſtles having been indiſputably ſincere Perſons, we muſt confeſs that if ever there were any in the World whoſe Vertue deſerved Eſteem, they certainly deſerv'd it from all Men. No deſign could be conceiv'd more profitable to Mankind than theirs, as has been ſhown in treating of the Morals they preach'd. None could go about to bring that Deſign to paſs with more Earneſt-

neſs and Zeal than they did, who ſacrific'd to it their Fortunes, their Preferments, their Honours, their Pleaſures, their Repoſe and their Lives. They compaſs'd Sea and Land under a thouſand Dangers, attempted a thouſand Difficulties, ſuffer'd Inconveniences and Pains unexpreſſible. They expos'd themſelves to moſt Mens Scorn, Malice and Cruelty. And to what end? To perſwade the ſame Men to live one with another after a manner ſo conformable to Reaſon, ſo advantagious to Socity, ſo pleaſant, ſo ſweet, that, except the Soveraign Happineſs to be injoy'd in the Life that never ends, nothing can be imagin'd preferable to it.

I ask now, If (being perſwaded of the probity and ſincerity of the Apoſtles, and otherwiſe ſatisfied by their Diſcourſes that they were not at all out of their Wits) we could deny Credit to their Teſtimony, if they had ſaid they had ſeen with their own Eyes certain matters of Fact, which they related with many Circumſtances; and that they had heard with their own Ears Diſcourſes full of Senſe and Wiſdom, which they repeated from beginning

ginning to end. Let every Man ask himſelf, if he would refuſe to believe one of his Friends, whom he knew to be ſincere and judicious, if he aſſur'd him poſitively that he had heard ſuch and ſuch a thing. Would one ſuſpect for a Lie the Teſtimony of a rational Man, and one who gave good ſigns of Sincerity, when he affirm'd that he had been preſent at the Execution of one of his Friends, had ſeen him die, and had heard him ſay many things which he very diſtinctly remember'd? I confeſs they that know not the Sincerity or Judgment of a Perſon, may make a doubt of the Truth of what they hear him ſay; but if once they are perſwaded of his Integrity and Underſtanding, it is impoſſible they ſhould refuſe to believe him. Every Man may be convinc'd of this by his own Experience, and may, as I have already obſerv'd, frame a thouſand particular Examples to himſelf of what I have been ſaying.

Now the Apoſtles tell us they liv'd ſome Years with Jeſus of *Nazareth*, from whom they learn'd all their Doctrine; that they ſaw him crucified, ſuch a day,

of ſuch a Month, of ſuch a Year; that they ſaw him die upon the Croſs, and after that buried in a Sepulchre, hewn out of a Rock for the Family of a Jewiſh Counſellor call'd *Joſeph* of *Arimathea*, who begged the Body of Jeſus from *Pilate*, and who, after having put it into the Sepulchre, roul'd a great Stone to the Door; that they ſaw the Roman Souldiers keep Guard about the Sepulchre, and that the chief of the Jews had carefully ſeal'd it up, for fear any ſhould take away the Body. Can we, being perſwaded as we ought to be of the Sincerity and Wiſdom of the Apoſtles, refuſe to believe them in theſe things? Certainly we muſt have loſt all Senſe, to believe that Perſons of Wiſdom and Integrity would prevaricate, in affirming a thing of this nature with ſo many Circumſtances. The ſame Judgment muſt be made concerning the Diſcourſes of Jeſus Chriſt, which they relate to us after a manner ſo lively, and ſo circumſtantiated, that we could not relate them better, if we came directly from hearing them.

It is more clear than day, to thoſe who are perſwaded that the Apoſtles had but common Senſe and Sincerity, that they really ſpoke Truth in all theſe Particulars.

That being ſo, Why ſhould we not believe the ſame Apoſtles, when they aſſure us that they have often ſeen their Maſter, in a moment, cure many incurable Diſeaſes; reſtore the Dead to Life; raiſe himſelf, after having lain more than thirty hours in the Sepulchre; eat and drink with them afterwards, for ſeveral days; and at laſt aſcend, in their Preſence, in a Cloud to Heaven? I perceive indeed that many Perſons who would not have queſtion'd the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles if they had ſaid nothing of the Miracles, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt, do, for that reaſon only, doubt of it. They would have eaſily believed that in *Judæa*, during the Government of *Pontius Pilate*, there had been a Man named Jeſus, who taught the Morals we read now in the Goſpels; that the Jewiſh Prieſts through Envy and Malice put him to Death; but that his Diſciples refrained not from teach-

ing his Precepts, and that the moſt afrightful Torments hinder'd them not from publiſhing them. They would praiſe all Chriſt's Doctrine, as the moſt excellent Philoſophy that ever was known to have been taught amongſt Men, and the beſt Principles that can be thought on to oblige them to live well one with another. But they reject all this, and believe that the Apoſtles were Impoſtors, only becauſe they ſpeak of Miracles, which they ſay they ſaw their Maſter do. Let us conſider a little why theſe Men do ſo.

There are but two ways whereby the Falſhood of a matter of Fact may be known. The firſt is, when it is known that the Witneſſes who relate it are deceiv'd, or have a deſign to deceive, though otherwiſe what they relate ſeem very poſſible. The ſecond is, when by clear and evident Proofs we know that the Fact in queſtion is in it ſelf abſolutely impoſſible. That the Apoſtles deſign'd not to deceive us has been made appear; nor can it be ſaid that they were themſelves conſtantly deceiv'd in all the Miracles of Jeſus Chriſt which they relate. If the Queſtion

ſtion were about a ſmall number of Miracles, that could not without difficulty be examin'd, this Suſpicion might with ſome probability be ſtarted: But they relate ſo many, and of ſo many different ſorts, that if what they ſay be not true, it muſt of neceſſity be that they have gone about to deceive us. For Example, they could not be miſtaken in Chriſt's Aſcenſion into Heaven, which they have conſtantly affirm'd, and of which the Chriſtians from the very beginning have made one of the chief Articles of their Faith. Thoſe who, as *Pliny* reports, ſung Hymns to Jeſus Chriſt as to a God, believ'd without doubt that Chriſt was aſcended into Heaven. And indeed I cannot but think that any who will take the Pains to read only the Goſpel of St. *Luke*, and the firſt Epiſtle of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians* (where are related the Circumſtances of many of the Miracles of Chriſt, and particularly of his Reſurrection, and after that of his appearing divers times unto the Diſciples) muſt certainly agree that thoſe who ſpoke after that manner were not ſeduced; and that if what they ſay be not true, of neceſſity

they

they muſt have deſign'd to deceive thoſe to whom they related theſe matters.

Now it has been ſhown demonſtratively that the Apoſtles were very ſincere Perſons. And thoſe who refuſe to admit their Teſtimonies do not tax them of having been deceived; Nor do they undertake to oppoſe directly the Reaſons, by which we prove their Sincerity. They content themſelves in making Objections upon the nature of Miracles; and ſo reduce themſelves to the ſecond way of knowing the Falſhood of a matter of Fact, which conſiſts in ſhowing that the thing related is in it ſelf abſolutely impoſſible.

I cannot ingage my ſelf here in the Examination of their Reaſons; neither is it neceſſary. It is ſufficient to obſerve in general, that all the Arguments, with which *Spinoza* and thoſe that follow his Opinions do diſpute againſt Miracles, are not comparable in evidence and force to the Principles we have eſtabliſh'd. Theſe Men endeavour to ſhow that the extraordinary Effects of the Divine Power, which we call Miracles, may be the neceſſary Conſequences of ſome of the Laws of Nature

ture, to us unknown; and that they are no more to be made uſe of as Proofs in this matter, than thoſe which occur daily in the ordinary courſe of Nature. They bring alſo ſome Metaphyſical Arguments, to ſhow that every thing comes to paſs neceſſarily. But all this overthrows not the direct Proofs which we have brought of the Truth of theſe Events, and which are infinitly more clear than their Reaſons, which no body can underſtand, as perhaps neither do they themſelves. But there is no danger that they ſhould perſwade any Man that the Reſurrection of a dead Body, or the Aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt into Heaven, could happen as naturally as the Birth of a Man into the World. As long as the direct Proofs of the Truth of thoſe matters of Fact hold good, no Man will be perſwaded that the Miracles which the Apoſtles relate are natural Effects of certain Laws of Nature, unknown to Men: Becauſe it will preſently be ask'd, Why then are no more of theſe Effects produced? How could Jeſus Chriſt know that after he was buried, he ſhould riſe again and aſcend into Heaven? And how came

it

it to pass, at that instant that he commanded a lame or a Paralytic Man to go, *&c.* that the Laws of Nature (unknown to us) were prepared and ready to cause the lame or Paralytic Man to walk.

It is plain then that the Philosophical Difficulties alledg'd against the Testimony of the Apostles, are not of so great force as the Arguments we have brought to confirm it; nor can they take place, so long as a Man is perswaded of the Sincerity of the first Disciples of Jesus Christ. And the truth is, that those who make these Objections do take this course, only because they cannot possibly alledg any thing against the matters of Fact, which we have prov'd. They indeavour to confound the Minds of their Admirers by obscure Metaphysical Arguments, and Suppositions, which they cannot prove, and which they assert nevertheless to be common Notions.

This being so, it cannot be doubted that Christ Jesus was extraordinarily favoured by God: And as it cannot be suppos'd, with any colour of Reason, that God would work Miracles

in

in favour of an Impoſtor, it muſt neceſſarily be acknowledged that he was a Teacher ſent from Heaven, to ſet Men right that were gone aſtray; and conſequently, that his Doctrine is true. But I will not inſiſt upon this Conſequence, as well becauſe it is evident in it ſelf, as becauſe many Learned Men already have thoroughly handled it. I will add only this Reflection before I end; *viz.* That we have no Reaſon to ſuſpect that Jeſus Chriſt himſelf deſigned to deceive us: Becauſe all the Reaſons brought to prove the Sincerity of the Apoſtles are as ſtrong in reſpect of him as of them. To be convinc'd of this, we need but apply to him, both as to his Perſon and Doctrine, all that has been ſaid concerning the Apoſtles. All the Religion which he taught Men, and which we find in the Goſpels, tends only to bring us to the Obſervation of the moſt holy and moſt admirable Morals that can poſſibly be imagin'd. And he could have no other Intereſt in the Eſtabliſhment thereof than what we all have; that is, the univerſal Welfare of all Men.

Thus

Thus then you ſee the Chriſtian Religion eſtabliſh'd after an invincible manner, without ſuppoſing any Inſpiration in the Hiſtories of our Lord and his Apoſtles. There remains nothing more to be added, but that to apprehend the Truth of all our Proofs, it is neceſſary only that we have the ſame Diſpoſition of Mind towards the Apoſtles, that we have towards any Perſon whoſe Sincerity is very well known to us, and whom we could not refuſe to believe when he ſhould aſſure us of a thing he had ſeen and heard, and in which it is morally impoſſible that he ſhould be deceived. The chief thing then is, to be well aſſur'd of the Integrity of the Apoſtles, which is eaſy to be done in following the Method we have deſcribed. Otherwiſe, while we attend not to the Reaſons which give Evidence thereunto, we ſhall never be ſufficiently ſenſible of the ſtrength of the other Arguments, that may be brought to prove the Divine Original of our Religion.

I intreat you, Sir, to examine what I have ſaid exactly, and to let me know if

if I have been to blame in affirming that we may be perfectly assured of the Truth of Christianity, without believing the History of the New Testament to be inspir'd. If I would have treated of this Subject thoroughly, I must have compos'd a Book, not writ a Letter. But what I have said is sufficient to let you see, that our Friend is not with any sort of Justice to be suspected of Irreligion, upon the account of his not believing the Inspiration of the Scriptures as it is commonly believed. I am, *&c.*

FINIS.

The chief Errors of the Press, which the Reader is desired to correct, are in Page 63.

Line	for	Read
17	*It is not likely*	*It is apparent.*
21	*should*	*would.*
22	*with the Him*	*with Him.*
23	*should*	*would.*

Tanner
621

FIVE LETTERS

Concerning the

INSPIRATION

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Translated out of

FRENCH.

Printed in the Year. 1690.

Thom. Tanner

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Advertiſement:

BY THE TRANSLATOR, TO THE READER.

FOR the better underſtanding of theſe five Letters, it ſeems neceſſary in a few words to explain the Occaſion and Subject of them. They are not, in French, one diſtinct Volume, as they are here made in Engliſh; but a part of two larger Volumes written in an Epiſtolary Form. The First entituled, (1) The Thoughts or Reflections of ſome Divines in *Holland*, upon Father *Simon's* Critical Hiſtory of the *Old Teſtament*. *The Second*, (2) A Defence of

(1) *Sentiments de quelques Theologiens de Hollande ſur l'Hiſtoire Critique du vieux Teſtament, Compoſée par le* P. Richard Simon. (2) *Defenſe des Sentimens, &c. contre la Reſponſe du Prieur de* Bolleville.

those Thoughts, in Answer to the Prior of *Bolleville*; *who is supposed to be also the same Mr.* Simon, *disguised under a borrowed Name.*

The general Design that Mr. Simon *drives at in the Critical History of the* Old Testament, *as well as in that of the* New (*which are now both of them published in English*) *is to represent the many Difficulties that are amongst the Learned concerning the Text of the Scriptures, and thereby to infer the necessity of receiving the Roman Doctrine of* Oral Tradition.

This Design raised him many Antagonists amongst the Protestants beyond the Seas, who have opposed him in their Writings, each according to his different Genius or Principles. The Book first above mentioned was one of the earliest of that kind; and it's Anonymous Author appears second to none, either in Critical Learning, or Solid Judgment. But it is not necessary to my purpose in this place to insist upon his particular differences with Mr. Simon *in Points of Criticism. This only in general, is needful to be observed; That though on the one side he sufficiently overthrows the pretended necessity of* Oral Tradition; *and on the other side, ingenuously*

nuously acknowledges all the Difficulties that are amongſt the Learned about the Text of the Scriptures; yet he does not thereupon leave the Judgment of his Reader in ſuſpence about ſo weighty a matter; but propounds a middle way, which he conceives proper to ſettle in Mens Minds a juſt eſteem of the Scriptures, upon a ſolid Foundation.

The Scheme or Syſtem of this middle way, he ſays, he received from his Friend Mr. N. *and therefore he gives it not in his own, but in his Friend's words. It is comprized in the Eleventh and Twelfth Letters of his foreſaid Book. And becauſe That is a diſtinct Subject of it ſelf, and of more conſequence to the generality of Chriſtians, than thoſe nice Diſputes of Criticiſm, with which he is obliged, in following Mr.* Simon, *to fill up the reſt of that Volume, I have therefore thought fit to tranſlate thoſe two Letters into Engliſh. They are the two Firſt of theſe Five; and are the Ground and Occaſion of the reſt.*

The publiſhing of that Volume of Letters produced an Anſwer from Mr. Simon, *or the Prior of* Bolleville, *as he calls himſelf; and further gave opportunity to the Author to learn from ſeveral hands, what-*

ſoever was objected moſt materially by others againſt the fore-mentioned Scheme, which he had publiſhed in his Friend's words. This afforded him occaſion, in replying to the Prior of Bolleville, *to inſert a further explanation and defence of that Scheme, from the hand of the Author; as alſo to juſtifie himſelf for having publiſhed it; and in the laſt place to remove the great Popular Objection ariſing from a Jealouſy, leſt that Syſtem of Mr.* N's *ſhould prejudice the Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion. I ſay, it prompted him to anſwer that Objection, by giving a ſolid Demonſtration of the Truth of our Religion, without intereſſing it in this Controverſy. This is done in the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Letters of his Second Book, Entituled,* A Defence, *&c. And they are the three laſt of theſe following Five.*

I have tranſlated them all, that the Reader may at once have a full view, both of Mr. N's *Opinions concerning the Holy Scriptures, in the fore-mentioned Syſtem; of the Objections that have been made againſt it; of the Anſwers he gives to thoſe Objections; and of the Uſe that may be made of all, in ſetling the Chriſtian Religion upon a Baſis not to be ſhaken*

by

by the Difficulties about the Scriptures, which the Learned are forced to acknowledge to be Insuperable.

This is all that I think needful to premonish the Reader upon this Subject. Only if in the perusal of the two first of these Letters, any one should be apt to condemn me for publishing things of this nice concernment in our Language, I intreat him to suspend his Censure, till he have read the rest; and as he goes along, to apply unto me the Author's Apology. Our Case is the same, and, I think, he has said all that is needful upon it. In a word, We live in an Age of so much Light, that it is not only now (as at all times) unbecoming the Dignity of such Sacred Truths, as the Christian Religion teaches us, to build them upon unsound Principles, or defend them by Sophistical Arguments; but it is also vain to attempt it, because impossible to execute. The Doctrine of Implicit Faith has lost its Vogue. Every Man will judg for himself, in matters that concern himself so nearly as these do. And nothing is now admitted for Truth, that is not built upon the Foundation of Solid Reason. Let not therefore any sim-

ple-hearted pious Persons be scandalized at these Disquisitions. They are not calculated for their Use. But they are absolutely needful for many others, who are more Curious, and less Religious. And that they may be in some measure useful to the Propagation and Advancement of True Religion amongst such, is the strong Hope, and hearty Desire of the Translater.

THE

THE FIRST LETTER.

YOU are desirous, Sir, that I should inform you more particularly about the thoughts of Mr. *N.* concerning the Inspiration of the *Sacred Writers*; and you ask me if our Friends do not suspect him to be tainted with *Deism?* He that gave me the Essay, which I send you, told me nothing of his other Opinions, nor of his Manner of Life: And for his Thoughts concerning that Divine Inspiration, which the Sacred Penmen received from God, it is conceived that from thence he cannot be concluded to be a *Deist*. It is presumed on the contrary, without entring into the Examination of what he says, that he believes by this Method he better answers the Objections, which the *Deists* and *Atheists* have used to make against the Stile of Holy Scriptures: And it

appears by this Essay, that he is far from being of their Opinions.

We ought not always to measure, or judg of the extent of any Man's Thoughts, in reference to Religion, by the manner of his explaining or defending them; as if all those who do not defend well their Religion, were Men of ill Design, that only seemingly defend, in order to destroy it. 'Tis said that the impious *Vaunini* designed to shew there is no God, in making as if he would prove there is one. But it does not follow from thence, that all others do the same, who defend, or oppose, weakly any Opinion. Otherwise we must believe many Writers both *Catholicks* and *Protestants*, who injudiciously oppose the Opinions of their Adversaries, and as ill defend their own, to be guilty of ill Design. If a Man would make an exact Catalogue of all the Catholick Authors, who have made impertinent Answers to the Protestants, and have used as impertinent Objections against them, it would amount to several Volumes in Folio; and the number of Protestant Authors, who have succeeded no better, would be little less. Nevertheless, I do not believe there is any Body so unjust, as

to

to pretend, That the generality of those Authors, on both sides, have been Cheats, who maintained what they did not Believe, or opposed what they did.

You Sir, have too much knowledg of the Frame and Constitution of Man's Mind, to be ignorant, that it is capable of believing in good earnest the most ridiculous things in the World; and, which is yet more astonishing, of giving its Assent at the same time to two things directly opposite. If you should, on purpose, invent the most ridiculous Religion imaginable, there would be People found in *Asia*, whose Opinions would not appear more rational. You have read Mr. *Bernier*'s Travels, and the History of the *Bramins*. What do you think of the Heathens of the great *Mogul*'s Country, and of those famous *Indian* Philosophers? Do you think there is none among them, that believes the monstrous Principles of their *Theology*? For my part I am perswaded there are very few that see the absurdity of it. You will say perhaps, That those Nations are under a blindness, which is next to down-right Foolishness; and that the *Europeans* are

not

not to be judged of by *Indians*. But are there not, in your Opinion, ſome even among the Chriſtians, who believe things abſurd, and againſt all ſort of appearance? The Proteſtants at leaſt do paſs that cenſure upon many of the Roman Catholic Doctrines, as *Tranſubſtantiation, the Infallibility of the Pope, or Council, &c.* And the Catholicks are not wanting to make like reproaches to Proteſtants.

The Catholicks believe, That many Units make more than a ſingle one; and do ſo much believe it, that he would paſs for a Fool amongſt them, as well as amongſt other Chriſtians, that would undertake to deny it; and nevertheleſs they believe that a Million of Humane Bodies, ſeparate from one another, make but One. This is a viſible Contradiction: Yet you know this is their Opinion concerning the Body of Chriſt. There are ſome that aſſuredly believe, That *God is not the Author of Sin*, &c. Who at the ſame time aſſert, That he created Man with a Deſign to let him fall into Sin; as a means to make his Juſtice Eminent, in puniſhing the greateſt part; and his Mercy, in pardoning ſome few. It is evident, that to ſay God ordered Sin ſhould be, on

purpoſe

purpose to accomplish thereby his Ends, is to make him the Author of it. But this is the frailty of Man's Mind; he sees not these Contradictions, because he has been so long accustomed to shut his Eyes, when they are presented to him.

A Man may then not only defend an ill Opinion that he believes, but also believe things absurd, and even contrary to one another, without being aware. And that's the Reason our Friends suspect not Mr. *N.* to be a *Deist*, though some may think his Opinions favour those that are so called. But that you may be able to judg, I send you here an abridgment of what he says; which one of my Friends imparted to me a while ago.

There are, says Mr. *N.* three sorts of things in Holy Writ, *Prophecies*, *Histories*, *and Doctrines*, which are not ascribed to particular Revelation.

To begin with the First; God made himself known to the Prophets after several manners; but it seems as if they might be reduced to these three. They *had Visions* by Day or by Night; they *heard Voices*; or they were *inwardly Inspired*. It is not our business here to examine

examine these things in themselves. We only enquire after what manner they have written that which they learnt by these Visions, by these Voices, or by these Inspirations.

1. Of Prophecies.

Prophecies have been written by God's express Command; by the Prophets themselves, or by others. For we cannot tell whether the Prophets themselves have always Written, or Dictated them; or whether their Disciples have Collected and Written them as exactly as their memory would serve. However it be, we cannot doubt but God made known to the Prophets that which we find in their Books, and that we ought to believe St. *Peter*, when he says, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Pet. 1. 21.

To tell us that which appeared to them in *Visions*, whether it be they themselves that writ it, or others that heard them tell it; there needed nothing but a good memory. A Man has no need of inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen, especially when the impression it made upon him was strong; as commonly hap-

happen'd to those to whom God sent any Vision. Hence it is observed, that every Prophet has his particular Stile; by which it appears that they related what they had seen, as they used to relate other things. Their Stile was the same when they spake by the Order of God, with that which they us'd in their ordinary Discourse.

The same Judgment is to be made concerning the recital of the words they heard. There needed no more but a good Memory to retain them. But we cannot be Assured that they have always recited exactly the very words they heard, and not sometimes thought it sufficient only to tell us the sense. When God told them the Name of some Person, it was necessary they should retain the Syllables of that Name; as when God ordered *Isaiah* to foretel that *Cyrus* should give the Jews liberty to return into *Palestine*, it behoved *Isaiah* to remember those two Syllables, *Coresh*. But there is no likelihood, that in the rest of his Discourse *Isaiah* has related word for word what he heard. The diversity of Stile does moreover prove, that the Prophets expressed after their own manner the sense

of what they heard. There is, for example, much difference between the Stiles of *Isaiah* and *Amos*. *Isaiah*'s manner of writing is high and lofty. On the contrary, that of *Amos* is low and vulgar; and we find in it divers popular Expressions, and many Proverbs, which sufficiently testify that this Prophet, who was a Shepherd, expressed after his own way what God had said to him. This is the Opinion of St. *Jerom*, in the Preface of his Commentary on this Prophet. * *The Prophet* Amos, saith he, *was skilled in Knowledg, not in Language; for the same Holy Spirit spoke in him that spoke by all the Prophets.* This Doctrine attributes clearly the expression to the Prophets, and the thing it self to the Holy Spirit; which appears also by the Remark he makes on Chap. III. saying, † *We told you that he uses the Terms of his own Profession: and because a Shepherd knows nothing more terrible than a Lion, he compares the Anger of God to Lions.* St. *Jerom* should have said, according to the common Opinion, that God made use, in speaking to *Amos*, of popular terms, and suitable to his profession, whereas he attributes plainly

* *Amos Propheta fuit imperitus Sermone, sed non Scientia: Idem enim qui per omnes Prophetas in eo Spiritus Sanctus loquebatur.*

† *Diximus illum artis suæ usum Sermonibus: & quia Pastor gregum nihil terribilius Leone cognoverat, iram Domini Leonibus comparat.*

to the Prophet the choice of the Terms in which the Prophecy is expreſſed. * *That words were dictated by God to the Prophets*, (ſays a late Learned Critick) *as it cannot be denied to have been done ſometimes, ſo it does not ſeem to have been done always: And hence it is, that according to the variety of the Times, and the Speakers, the Phraſe of the Prophets is alſo different.*

But it is commonly alledged, that the Prophets recite the ſame words they heard; Becauſe they introduce God himſelf, ſpeaking, *Thus ſaith the Lord*, &c. That is no Proof. For it is the cuſtom, both of the *Hebrews* and *Greeks*, to bring in always thoſe, whoſe Senſe they relate, as ſpeaking in their own Perſons; though in doing ſo, they tye not themſelves to their words. I will give you a plain Example thereof. It is the different manner in which the Decalogue is ſet down in *Exodus* and in *Deuteronomy*; although God is ſaid to ſpeak perſonally in both places. God ſays in *Exodus*, *Remember the Sabbath day*, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, *Keep the Sabbath-day*, &c. It is in *Exodus*, *To keep it holy. Six days ſhalt thou labour*, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, *To keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six*

* *Ut verba à Deo Prophetis dictata ſint, ſicuti interum eveniſſe non eſt negandum, ita non videtur perpetuum. Atque hinc factum eſt ut pro temporum atque loquentium varietate etiam Sermo Prophetarum differret.* Grot. *in Mat.* 1. 22.

days ſhalt thou labour, &c. It is in *Exodus*, *Nor thy Cattel*, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, *Nor thine Ox*, *nor thine Aſs nor any of thy Cattel*, &c. And this Commandment ends thus, *That thy Man-Servant, and thy Maid-Servant, may reſt as well as thou; And remember that thou waſt a Servant in the Land of* Egypt, *and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, thrô a mighty Hand, and a ſtretched-out-Arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day.* In *Exodus*, the reaſon of keeping the Sabbath, is taken from the Creation of the World in Six Days, without any mention of Slaves, or of the ſlavery of *Egypt*. There are ſome other Differences in that which follows, but not conſiderable. However it appears by this, that either *Moſes* in *Deuteronomy*, or the Author of the Book of *Exodus*, did not tie themſelves ſcrupulouſly to exact words, as the Jews now a-days do; altho both theſe Authors bring in God ſpeaking perſonally. *Grotius* has hereupon made this judicious Remark. * *It is to be obſerved*, ſays he, *that the Words ſet down in the place in* Exodus, *were pronounced by an Angel in the Name of God; but thoſe which are in* Deuteronomy,

* Sciendum eſt autem quæ in Exodo hoc loco habentur verba per Angelum Dei nomine prolata, quæ vero ſunt Deuter. V. eſſe Moſis eadem memoriter referentis, & qui-

nomy, *are the words of* Moſes *repeating the ſame things; and that with ſo great liberty, that ſometimes he tranſpoſes words; changes ſome for others of the ſame ſignification; omits ſome as ſufficiently known by thoſe gone before; and adds others by way of Interpretation. The like liberty of changing words is obvious to a careful Reader in other places of Sacred Writ, as* Gen. XVII. 4. *compared with* 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. *compar'd with* 43. Exod. XI. 4. *compar'd with* XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11, *&c. compar'd with* Deut. IX. 27, *&c. Now this ſhews, That we ſhould not catch at words in Holy Writ, as ſome of the Jews do, who fancy that thoſe words in* Exodus, *and thoſe in* Deuteronomy *were pronounc'd in one and the ſame moment of time. They fancy alſo that where there is tranſpoſition, and changing the order of what was ſaid firſt, what laſt; that the laſt importing the ſame ſenſe were alſo ſaid firſt. There are in the Holy Hiſtories*

quidem ea libertate, ut voces tranſponat interdum, quaſdam eum idem ſignificantibus commutet, omittat quædam ſatis nota ex prioribus, addat alla interpretamenti vice. Par mutandi verba libertas & aliis in locis Sacræ Scripturæ non indiligenti ejus lectori apparet. Ut Gen. XVII. 4. collato 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. collato 43. Exod. XI. 4. collato XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11. & ſeq. collato Deut. IX. 27. & ſeq. Pertinet autem hæc obſervatio eò ne in Sacris Literis ſimus VOCULARUM AUCUPES, ut Judæi quidam, qui & illa quæ in Exodo & quæ in Deuteronomio ſunt verba pariter, uno eodemq; puncto temporis profata, ſimulq; ubi tranſpoſitio eſt inverſo ordine, quæ prius fuerant dicta & poſterius, poſteriora eundem ſenſum continentia prius etiam dicta ſomniant. Satis multa ſunt in ſacris Hiſtoriis miracula, ut nova extra neceſſitatem, nulloq; uſui comminiſci nihil ſit opus.

so many Miracles, that we ought not to invent new ones without necessity, and such as are of no use.

If you require yet another convincing Proof, that this manner of speaking personally, does not denote that they are the proper Words of him that is introduc'd speaking after this manner, you have no more to do but to look into the Gospels, where the Evangelists always make our Saviour to speak personally, and yet recite not the same words that he made use of. For, beside that Christ spoke *Syriac* or *Chaldee*, there is oft great difference between their Recitals. The Holy Spirit never tied it self up to words, as many of our Divines do now a-days. He only prompted the Holy Pen-men to give us the true sense of the Words that God made use of to make the Prophets understand his Will; and it is only in respect to the sense, and to the things, that the Apostles assure us that they were inspired from God.

The third sort of *Prophecy*, or manner by which God made known his Will, was by inward Inspiration, without Vision, and without Voice. Here-

of

of two different ſorts may be conceiv'd. For either God might inſpire *Prophecies* or *Predictions* word for word, as the Prophets ſhould pronounce them: As when there was occaſion to tell ſome Name, unknown before to the Prophet: Or he might inſpire only the ſenſe, which they might expreſs afterwards in their own way: As moſt commonly it happen'd; the firſt Occaſion being very rare. It ſeems to me, that when any one does apprehend a ſenſe diſtinctly, it is not difficult for him to expreſs it faithfully. And we ought to ſuppoſe, that the Prophets full of the thoughts wherewith God inſpir'd them, had a very clear and diſtinct *Idea* thereof: Which will be eaſily underſtood, if we conſider, that the things wherewith God inſpir'd them were eaſy to be conceiv'd, and proportion'd to the underſtanding of all the World; at leaſt as to the literal ſenſe. It happened alſo ſometimes, that without inſpiring either Words or Senſe, God drew from the Mouth of ſome Perſons, Prophecies which thoſe who ſpoke them underſtood otherwiſe, and did not think them to be Prophecies. He caſt them into certain Circumſtances, and involv'd

them in certain Events, which made them say things that were true Predictions, without their knowing them to be so. Such was *Caiaphas*'s Prediction, when he says, *That it was better that one Man should die for the People, than that the whole Nation should perish. Now he said not that of himself*, says St. *John*, *but being High Priest that Year, he propheſied.* To speak properly, God inspir'd him not those words, but the Nature of the Business they were about in the *Sanhedrim* drew them from him. They were afraid that Jesus would draw all the People to him, and enterprise something against the Roman Authority, which would not then fail to send a puissant Army into *Palestine*, and totally waste it. *Caiaphas* thereupon urges a very common Politic Maxim, *That it were better to destroy one Man, though he were innocent, than to expose the whole State to utter Desolation.* In *Caiaphas*'s sense there is nothing of Prophetic or Inspir'd. But in the Gospel-sense, that which *Caiaphas* said, signifi'd more than he intended, and contained a true Prophecy. It's very likely that more Predictions of this nature may be found in the Old Testament.

For

For Example: *David* ſays of himſelf and of his Enemies divers things, without thinking of propheſying, which contain nevertheleſs Predictions of that which ought to happen to Chriſt and his Enemies. He ſays *Pſal.* XLI. 10. *He that ate of my Bread hath lift up his Heel againſt me:* He meant ſurely ſome of thoſe who were riſen againſt him in *Abſolom*'s Conſpiracy, as *Achitophel* or ſome other, and he ſpeaks plainly of a thing happened to himſelf. It is this very thing that inſpires him, if one may ſo ſay, theſe words; which betoken what ſhould befal Jeſus Chriſt by the Treachery of one of his Diſciples, as appears by *John* XIII. 18. The Author of the LXIX*th*, and CIX*th Pſalms*, whether it were *David*, or ſome other, did not probably think of fore-telling what ſhould one day befal a Diſciple of the *Meſſiah*, when he curs'd his Enemies: And yet St. *Peter* in the *Acts* applies ſome words of theſe Pſalms to *Judas*. There needs no great ſharpſightedneſs to ſee that the Author pretended not to ſpeak of *Judas*, and that he was not immediately inſpir'd by the good and merciful Spirit of God, when he ſaid, *Set thou a wicked Man over him, and let Sa-*

Acts i. 20.

tan ſtand at his Right-hand: When he ſhall be judged let him be condemned, and let his Prayer become Sin: Let his days be few, and let another take his Office: Let his Children be Fatherleſs, and his Wife a Widow: Let his Children continually be Vagabonds and beg; let them ſeek their Bread alſo out of their deſolate places: Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the Stranger ſpoil his Labour: Let there be none to extend Mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his Fatherleſs Children: Let his Poſterity be cut off, and in the Generation following let their Name be blotted out: Let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembred with the Lord; and let not the Sin of his Mother be blotted out, &c. It is plain that theſe are the words of a Man full of exceſſive Choler, and of an extream deſire to be revenged. Now the Law of *Moſes* permitted not, any more than the Goſpel, to wiſh ill, or do it, to Children, in revenge of the Injury received from their Parents. Yet ſome famous Divines have put in the Title of this Pſalm, *That* David, AS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST, *being driven on by a ſingular Zeal, prays that Vengeance may be executed on his Enemies*. And where do they find that Jeſus Chriſt

Christ does curse his Enemies at that rate? Have they forgotten the words that proceeded from his dying Mouth, in favour of the wickedest Race that ever was? Those that crucified him, were they not the greatest Enemies he had, and the most obstinate Adversaries of the Gospel? And, far from making the Imprecations against them that they deserved, did not he pray to his Father to forgive them? Has he not ordered us to imitate him, and to pray for those that persecute us? I cannot understand how it can be said, that *David*, as a *Type* of *Jesus Christ*, made such horrible Imprecations against his Enemies.

I confess, I understand not Christian Religion, if it permit the pronouncing such Curses, and the wishing to be revenged after so cruel a manner, as does the Author of this Psalm, and those of divers others, in which we find such like Imprecations; As that of *Psal.* cxxxvii. *O Daughter of* Babylon, *who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us: Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little Ones against the Stones!* God forbid that we should desire to dash out the Brains of

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Infidel's Children! Yet nevertheleſs we ſee that all theſe Pſalms are indifferently ſung in Proteſtant Churches, without taking notice that they are not all equally inſpir'd. And I remember that asking a Divine, how we could ſing Pſalms full of ſuch Imprecations? He anſwered me ſlightly, that it was lawful to uſe them againſt the Enemies of the Church, and that for his part he made that Application to them, when he ſung theſe Pſalms. Thus you ſee what the Jewiſh Opinion of the Inſpiration of words, and of the Divinity of each Verſe of the Scripture produces.

We may conceive another ſort of *Prophecies*, which conſiſted not in foretelling things to come, but in explaining the Scripture, and in compoſing readily Hymns to the Honour of God. There are ſome Examples of theſe Hymns in the New Teſtament, as that of the bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, and ſome others. It ſeems as if there went only Piety and Zeal to the compoſing them. At leaſt it is very conceivable, that a pious, zealous Man may eaſily now a days praiſe God in that manner, without any Preparation. A good part of the Pſalms ſeems to have been thus compos'd, as alſo di-

vers

vers other Songs which are in the Old Teſtament. The Pſalms where the Verſes, or the Pauſes, begin with the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, ſeem to have been compos'd at more leiſure. For this Regularity ſhews that there was Meditation and Pains uſed, as is in Acroſticks. See *Pſal.* cxix. and the *Lamentations* of *Jeremy*. So we ſee too, that in this ſort of Works, the Holy Writers do not ſpeak in the Name of God, nor begin their Diſcourſe with, *Thus ſaith the Lord.* Yet we may ſay that the Authors of theſe pious Songs were full of the Holy Spirit, when they compos'd them; that is to ſay, it was a Spirit of Piety that carry'd them to take pains in thoſe Compoſitions; and in that ſenſe we may ſay that they were inſpir'd by God, though not ſo immediately as Predictions. The Spirit of God is often taken for the Spirit of Holineſs, that is to ſay, for a diſpoſition of Spirit conformable to the Commandments of God; as many Learned Men have obſerved.

I will now remark briefly in what manner the Sacred Hiſtories have been written: And then, in treating of Doctrines, I will ſpeak of that ſort of

Prophe-